

PS2

■ australian playstation

■ issue #020

KILLZONE

Sony's enormous shooter is the must-play game of 2004

PSW'S VERDICT

PS2's FUTURE EXPOSED:

THE PSX

We take a look inside the Ultimate PlayStation

SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

War in all its gory

SILENT HILL 4

Fear heads inside in The Room

DRIV3R

Even the future has typos

NEW GTA

Location revealed at last

GRAN TURISMO 4

Revving up on the grid

NO DVD? PLEASE, ASK YOUR NEWSAGENT

REVIEWED:
FFX-2 R: RACING SONIC
HEROES MAFIA SOCOM 2
DOWNHILL DOMINATION



BOND 007
EVERYTHING
OR NOTHING

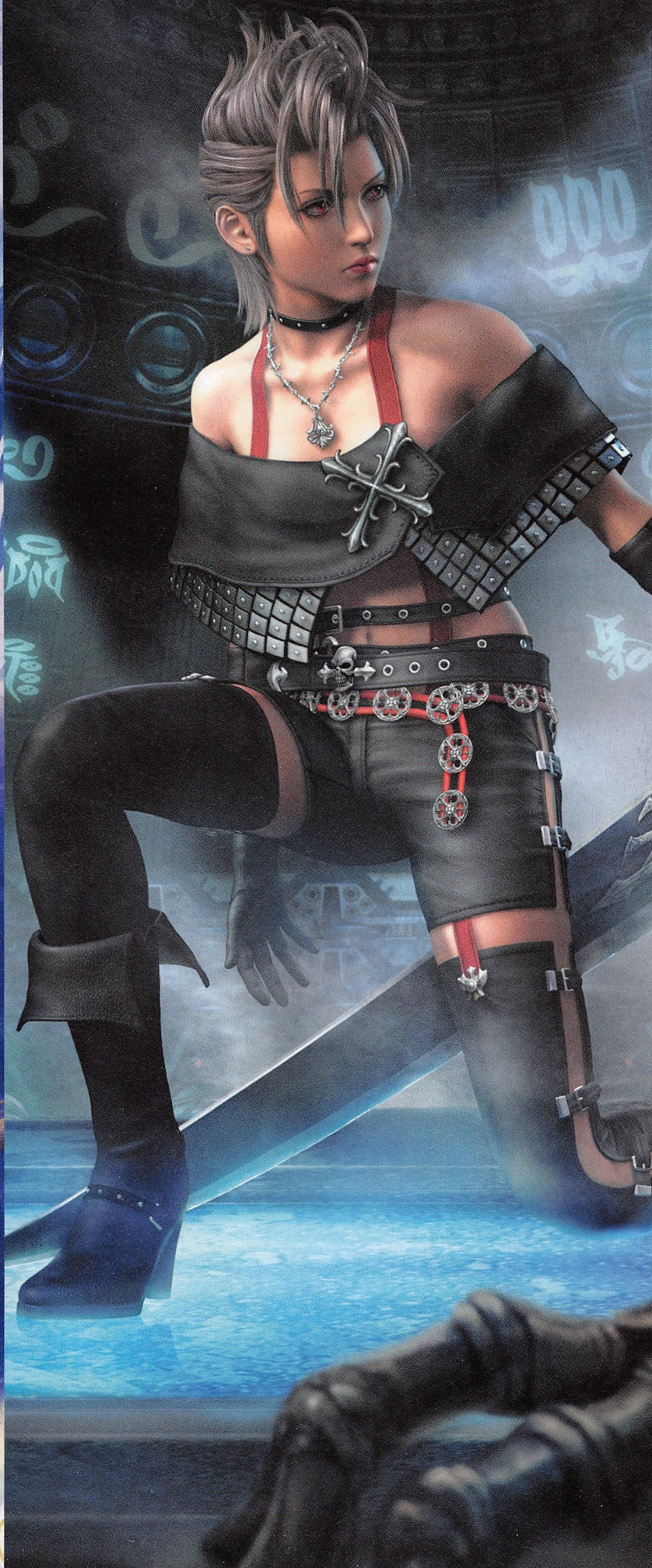
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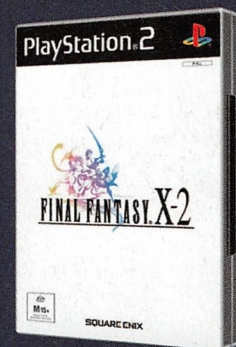
WHY SHOULD THE BAD GUYS HAVE ALL THE FUN?



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PSW
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008 GLOBAL

SHELLSHOCK 'NAM 67, NEW GRAND THEFT AUTO, SILENT HILL 4 AND THE PSW TOP TEN. OH, AND NOT FORGETTING OUR BIG RICHARD BURNS RALLY DEVELOPER DIARY, EXCLUSIVE TO PSW.

012 GLOBAL EXTRA

IT'S ALL GRAN TURISMO 4 BABY...ALTHOUGH...WHAT'S THIS?! ANOTHER DELAY IS ON THE CARDS?

018 DIALOGUE

THE LETTERS SECTION, THIS MONTH WITH PICTURES OF ZAIRE, A FUNNY COLLAPSED HOUSE AND SOME SIMPSONS GAMES.

FEATURES

054 INSIDE THE PSX

WE'VE IMPORTED A JAPANESE PSX. NO SILLY. NOT A PS ONE, A PSX - DVD RECORDER, HARD DISK, PS2 AND TV TUNER IN ONE. WE'RE STILL LEARNING JAPANESE.

095 TALKBACK WITH MICHAEL MADSEN

THE SERIAL VIDEOGAME VOICEOVER MAN TALKS TO PSW ABOUT CHRISTOPHER WALKEN, CARS AND VEGA BROTHERS.



056 THE PSX Multi-purpose game console or - sorry, I can't say it.

PSW WELCOME

EDITORIAL

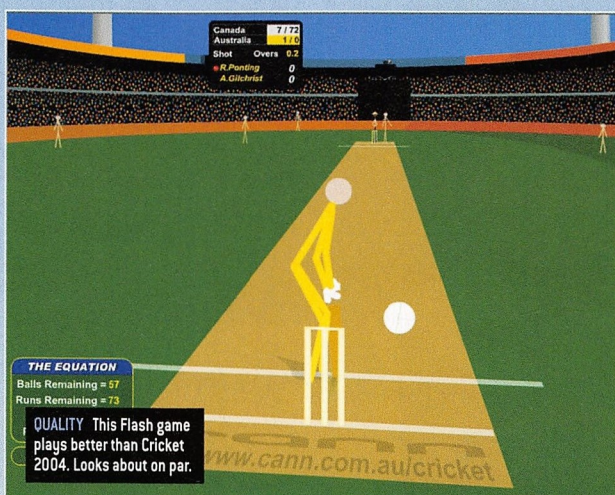
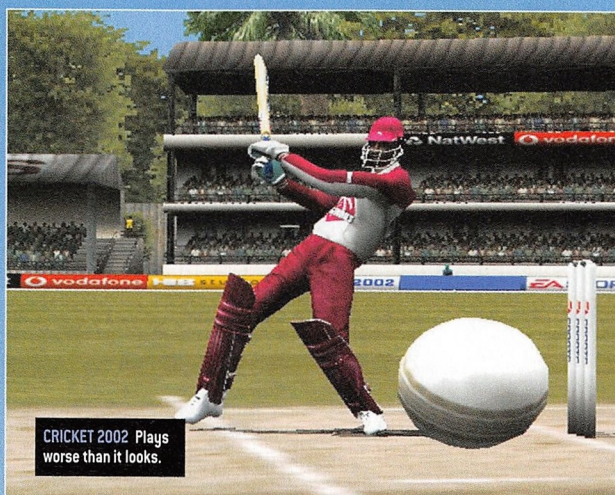
We still can't get over *Cricket 2004* [p.92]. How can a game be so repulsive? How can EA, generally so consistent with the quality of their titles, publish such a travesty? And why does it continue to sell, even though its incompetence is obvious for all to see? Well, the answer to the third of those questions is obvious: it's cricket. For all the one million PlayStation owners out there, probably no more than 10% actually have a clue when it comes to games. Its success is the product of the 'PlayStation as DVD player' generation, and it's a crying shame. Is this the way it will always be?

Well, you see North American EA titles have always been dependable in their quality - sports titles in particular. So we know when we play a *Madden*, or an *NHL*, we can expect a bug-free, comprehensive, refined experience of the given sport. The EA Sports logo, in most cases, is thus reassuring. [Although, *FIFA*'s mediocrity remains a great mystery with regards to the majority of EA's sporting library. Perhaps *Pro Evo* is so far ahead of its time it, like, rides a hoverboard?]

But these 'local' sporting products - *Cricket 2004* and the recent very ordinary *Rugby 2004* detract from EA's otherwise excellent reputation. As much as we complain about yearly sporting updates, the EA Sports library is normally so consistently brilliant that we're prepared to overlook the supposedly evil commercial realities that these releases imply. For the most part, EA dominate software sales with good reason.

Cricket and *Rugby* however underline the cynicism in the company's market priorities, with their apparently minimal consideration for the game-playing experience. With releases like this, EA lose touch with the gamer, and lose the respect they have developed over more than a decade. And sure, the 90% of people who don't have a clue will still purchase, and play, because these titles are more or less the only option if you've got a craving for these very Australian sports. However, as the knowledgeable 10%, we more than anyone else must treat these titles as they deserve to be treated, and do our best to ensure that EA cannot slip into a habit of ignoble releases. Don't accept poor games just because they have our very own Brett "Rat Boy" Lee on the box. It's our obligation not to let the prestige of the EA Sports logo to diminish Down Under. Simply, don't buy it.

/ JACKSON GOTHE-SNAPE



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Next Publishing Pty Ltd

ACN 002 647 645

ISSN 1329-7694

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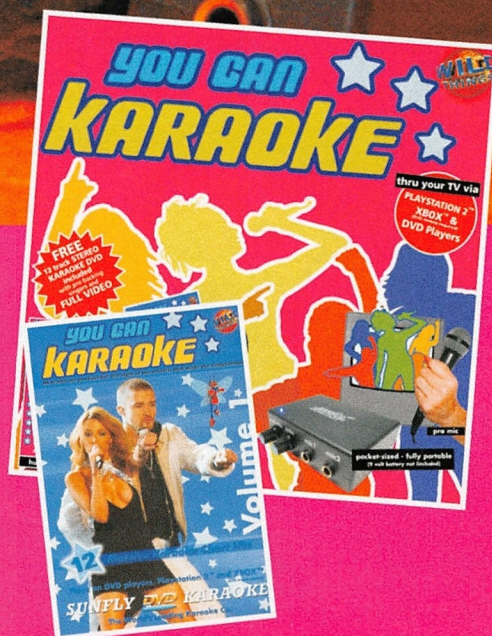
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APOCALYPSE NOW!

THE WORLD'S MOST TERRIFYING CONFLICT IS BROUGHT TO LIFE ON PS2 IN *SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67*. REMEMBER YOU SAW IT HERE FIRST!

YOU'VE NEVER SEEN THIS GAME BEFORE. YOU'VE never even heard of this game before. Because before we printed these words and pics, nobody had any inkling this was going to happen. This is *Shellshock: Nam '67* – the Vietnam combat game from the people behind this month's cover game *Killzone*. It's potentially the most electrifying and disturbing game of the year, and you won't be able to read about it anywhere else.

Shellshock takes the form of a shooter, not unlike *Killzone*. Just like in the film *Platoon*, the story concerns a young rookie sent into combat, and the absolute horror he witnesses there. You'll play the new boy as he wades knee-deep through blood and guts at the height of the controversial conflict. *Shellshock* is hardly the first game to attempt to show the horrors of

war, but it's the first game that might make it work.

Like *Killzone* you're only one small part of the large-scale battles in *Shellshock*. All around you, pitched battles are taking place. Poorly-equipped North Vietnamese peasants versus heavily-armed US infantry, guerrillas versus grunts. Stop and stare at it all and you're likely be killed instantly. But gain more battlefield smarts and you'll move through the ranks, eventually being entrusted with one-man stealth missions of the utmost secrecy and importance.

Make no mistake about it. *Shellshock* isn't solely about how many 'gooks' you shoot or how athletically you leap around the battlefield. It's about the terror of battle, the futility of war, the immense odds stacked against a helpless combat virgin when surrounded by thousands of battle-savvy hostiles in a world he



ONE WITH NATURE You won't be short of cover spots.



BACK-UP Avenge your pal's death the army way.



HOLD THE FORT Not every level is set in the jungle.



FOREST FIRE Call in air strikes on guerilla camps.

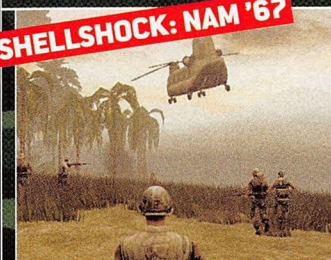


LONE GUNMAN Take on solo missions as a veteran.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67 CALLS IN REINFORCEMENTS.

SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67



CONFLICT: VIETNAM



Shellshock: Nam '67 isn't the only Vietnam-themed title coming to PS2 this year, as another developer sets its sights on the most brutal and ultimately pointless war of all time. The *Conflict* series, previously confined to early 90s Baghdad, is also taking on the Viet Cong this autumn. The *Conflict* series went from good to better with *Conflict: Desert Storm 2* so we're confidently expecting something rather tasty. All we have to go on so far is this one teaser shot, but seeing how *Conflict: Vietnam* will continue the same mix of squad-based shooter with tactical pretensions that served the previous games so well, we can't see the two titles stealing each other's thunder. While *Shellshock: Nam '67* is all about the visceral experience of full-blown war, we expect *Conflict: Vietnam* to wow with jungle-based strategy action. And if these two games do well, expect an entire platoon of 'Nam games to arrive in 2005.



GET A MOVE ON No time to admire your handiwork.

has no idea how to cope with. If all this sounds heavy, that's because it is. But it doesn't mean there'll be any 'standing around in the rain with your hands held out like a damp teenage Jesus, pondering the dark night of the soul' rubbish like in *The Thin Red Line*. Nope, all the action unfolds in front of you, in real time. You won't be gifted with supernatural survival powers so you'll need to think quick and shoot even faster. Luckily enemies won't take thousands of shots to kill.

Let us quote Hermen Hulst (yes, that is his real name) of developer Guerrilla: "Through extensive research on all topics, but also by not shying away from the more controversial aspects of war, we are looking to provide gamers with the closest thing to actually being there." When he says, "Not shying away", he means getting deliberately and uncomfortably close to the horrors of war – the bits with dead people's guts in. And the bits where burning civilians run out of forests and there's nothing you can do. And the bits where you find the head of your buddy on a stick. **Shellshock:** *Nam '67* will arrive in the not so distant future. Check into boot camp now.



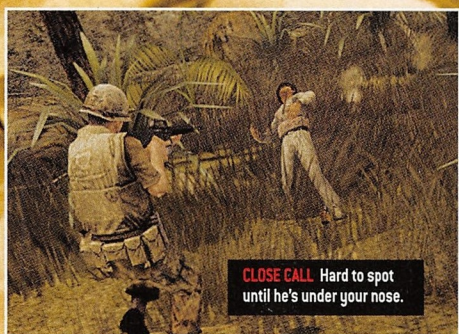
TOUGH LOOK Grim and determined only goes so far.



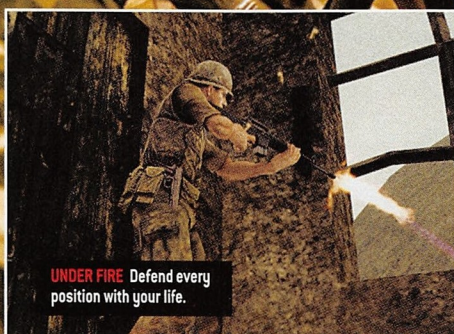
GO POINT Lead the way, but watch out for booby traps.



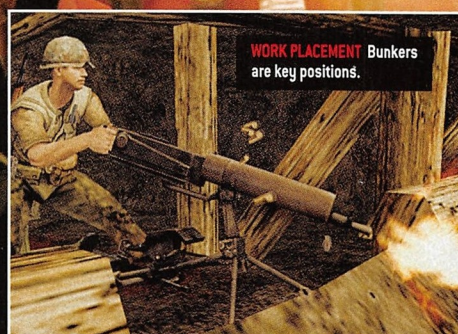
HANG TOUGH This'll be a 'not shying away' moment.



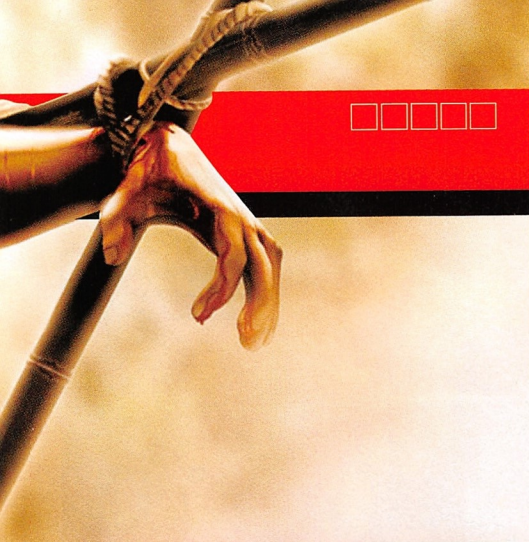
CLOSE CALL Hard to spot until he's under your nose.



UNDER FIRE Defend every position with your life.



WORK PLACEMENT Bunkers are key positions.



□□□□□

WE LOVE THE SMELL OF SHELLSHOCK IN THE MORNING!

WHY WE THINK *SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67* WILL BE AMAZING.



KILLZONE

The people who make this are also doing *Killzone*. We know *Killzone* is amazing – we've played it to death. It just does everything right. Soon you will discover this for yourself, and the world will be changed forever.



HISTORY

The Vietnam conflict rewrote the rules of war, showing how a poorly armed country could use local knowledge and determination to defeat a world superpower. This should translate into fantastically varied gameplay.



BARBARITY

Brutalised by years of crushing conflict in some of the world's worst conditions, both sides became almost tribal in their savagery. And you'll see it all in *Shellshock*. Close up. In stereo.



PSW
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GTA NEWS

EAST MEETS WEST

NEW GTA EXPOSED!

TOKYO, LAS VEGAS, BOGOTA AND SAN ANDREAS CONFIRMED AS NEW GTA LOCATIONS? WE'RE KEEPING OUR FINGERS CROSSED FOR PYRMONT.

PSW HAS UNCOVERED THE FIRST DETAILS ON THE next instalment of *Grand Theft Auto* for PlayStation2. Despite the iron curtain of secrecy wrapped tightly around the covert development, the first snippets of hard info have been delicately whispered into our shell-like. After rumours suggesting that the new location for the series would be Las Vegas or Los Angeles, publisher Take 2 took the unusual step of registering the name *GTA: San Andreas* with the US Patents office early in the new year, without making any official announcement. Days later the names *GTA: Sin City*, *GTA: Bogota* and *GTA: Tokyo* were also registered by the publisher.

Of all the potential locations, Sin City (otherwise known as Las Vegas) is the most likely to be the setting of this November's game. Las Vegas is a place that has flourished on mafia investment and relaxed laws on gambling, prostitution and drugs. The *GTA* series and real-life Las Vegas are ideal partners in crime.

Tokyo, by comparison, has little criminal history to offer, aside from the pathetically small scale Yakuza crime syndicate and knicker-sniffing foreign businessmen. We'd much rather be seen in a sharp suit recreating famous casino heists in Las Vegas than hanging out with a bunch of schoolgirl-pimping mafia wannabes with fishy breath.

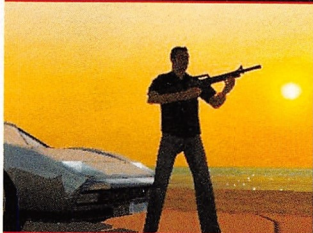
Rockstar's choice of San Andreas also baffles somewhat. The real San Andreas is a earthquake-prone

hippy hideout in the middle of California which has seen as much violence, crime and murderous activity as an episode of *Ally McBeal*. But perhaps the most perplexing and obscure of the new *GTA* names is Bogota. The capital of Columbia isn't likely to be embraced as a holiday destination by many, unless kidnap, assault or a painful death excites you. Famed for terrorist attacks by revolutionary drugs organizations, Bogota is also a top place to get kidnapped if you happen to speak English, look like a student and have rich parents generous enough to pay ransom. In other words, it's a hood's paradise, albeit an incredibly dangerous one.

It's likely that all names will eventually be used, with other console formats (perhaps Sony's revolutionary handheld device, the PlayStation Portable) getting different locations. Development of a PS3 instalment has already begun and is expected to accompany the US launch of PS3 next year. It'll be huge and, if Rockstar and Sony continue to indulge in corporate swinging sessions, completely exclusive to PS3 owners.

In related *GTA* news, developer Rockstar has set up a new division dedicated to gathering new voice acting talent for its games, the first signing being none other than slapheaded drugs dustbin Shaun Ryder, previously of tripped-out beat merchants The Happy Mondays and Black Grape. Hopefully not for a role in *GTA: Manchester* some time next year...

PSWS 10 MOST WANTED



1. DRIV3R

Look at this month's exclusive playtest, go on, just look at it. It's hot, it's wet and it's beautiful, and it's got us damn near crying with excitement. This is "the magnificent."

2. SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

If anything is going to help us get over the memory of Sarge and Powchalski buying the farm back in the Mekong Delta, this is it.

3. GRAN TURISMO 4

We just can't stop playing it. Having the whole game in English for our firm yet gentle enjoyment will be as close to God as any of us ever get. Dream. Breathe deep and dream.

4. KILLZONE

After reading the eight pages of glorious info-sexual dirtiness ensconced in this very magazine, we can safely assume you are fully greased-up for *Killzone*. If not, get out and don't come back.

5. SPLINTER CELL: PT

With names like Mortified Penguin, Grimsdottir and, er, Sam Fisher, this game is destined for great things. Sure, it's not much of an improvement on the first one, but that was both refined and gadget-tastic.

6. HITMAN: CONTRACTS

Stabbing people in the dark is always good for a laugh. Sometimes it's fun to play a video game afterwards too. *Hitman 2* was great like the wall of China, and we have high hopes for the sequel. Join us or we'll have you shot.

7. FIGHT NIGHT BOXING 2004

Despite the immense fun factor, we can only pummel each other half to death once or twice a month for fear of permanent brain damage. But the wonders of *Fight Night* could see a massive fight, every night. Whoop!

8. SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

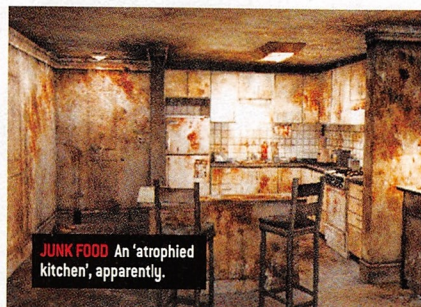
Oooh, look at the scary baby. Scary.

9. FLAT OUT

Smashing things up and melting stuff are the two noblest actions a human can ever perform. *Flat Out* lets you smash things up, so it must be pretty damn good. More soon.

10. METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

It's at least twenty years until *Metal Gear* sneaks up behind us once again and snaps our puny neck. We still can't help but get excited though.



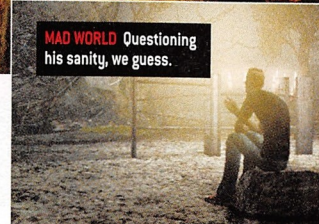
JUNK FOOD An 'atrophied kitchen', apparently.



THE PITS What's the betting one is alive?



STUCK ON YOU This isn't frightening, just weird.



MAD WORLD Questioning his sanity, we guess.



FIVE ALIVE Henry leaves the room after four days.

TRAPPED IN PARADISE?

SILENT HILL'S HELL IN A CELL

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THE PREMIERE HORROR SERIES RETURNS. DARE YOU ENTER *SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM*?

JUST WHEN YOU THINK *SILENT HILL*

can't get any nastier, the series puts another twist on the bloodied thumbscrews and comes up with filth that's guaranteed to disturb your brains and your belly. The fourth instalment sees Henry, your regular average guy, unable to leave his apartment. While this might sound like a great slacking excuse, Hezza has to use his room as a hub to enter all kinds of infernal netherworlds in an

attempt to escape. The longer it takes, the more the Otherworld will seep into the mundane confines of his personal space. I mean, we've all got problems with cockroaches, but this is ridiculous.

The main innovation for this latest installment is that the action will switch between a first and third-person perspective. This will ramp up the horror by bringing you, quite literally, face to face with hideous nightmare creatures. We've

seen early footage and a couple of key images stand out: the limp, puppet-like figure floating eerily over the bed, composed of a human corpse on its back, limbs trailing like some satanic doll. Brrr. And most strikingly, the two-headed baby witch monsters. That's right. TWO-HEADED BABY WITCH MONSTERS. With big-ass claws. In the dark. Yes, even a fourth trip to the hill can still scare us. *Silent Hill 4* oozes disturbingly into shops this October.



TWIN TERROR Nearby suburb Paramatta.



SHARP EXIT Impalement is such a lovely way to go.

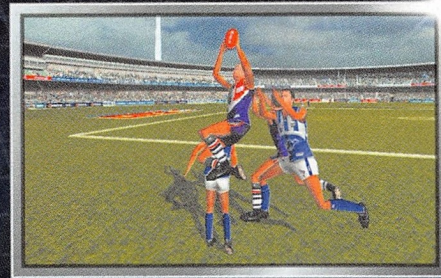
NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT



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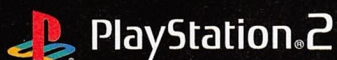


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HMM Will we get to see the new Peugeot 307 though?



THIS BURNS DICK

RICHARD BURNS RALLY DEVELOPER DIARY

DENNIS GUSTAFSSON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF WARTHOG SWEDEN, SPEAKS EXCLUSIVELY TO PSW ABOUT THE GAME THAT CLAIMS TO BE THE FIRST TRUE RALLY SIMULATION. IT'LL BE FANGING IT INTO STORES IN MAY.

STAGE ONE

Hello everyone. I've been asked to present you with a developer diary covering work on our pride and joy: *Richard Burns Rally*. This will be the first diary I write and my initial thought was to try and give you not only a glimpse of what the game will be like but also, if I can, some industry insights into how a game like this is made.

Before I begin I must first say that if the tone of this first entry seems a bit subdued, it's because we have just recently been informed that Richard Burns, whom we have all worked alongside during the project, has been diagnosed with a brain tumor. We are all saddened by this terrible news and our hopes and prayers go out towards his quick recovery. Richard is a great guy and terrific to work with, and we feel distressed about what has happened to him. [Check out the pictures of Richard, Robert Reid and me at www.richardburns.com as we lay the plans for *Richard Burns Rally* to take over the world.]

RIGHT. TO BEGIN...

This is my first developer diary so bear with me if



CHEAP RENT Big backyard, some traffic noise.

it takes a while for me to get into the groove of things. An introduction, perhaps? You are the esteemed reader of course, and my name is Dennis Gustafsson, creative director of Warthog Sweden. Our team is developing *Richard Burns Rally* for our UK-based friends and publishers SCI. My job is to design the game and keep track of all content and burning issues throughout the development of the project. The people who do all the hard work are the physics, platform and application programmers, the sound engineer, the art director and the artists. Should the occasion arise, I'd only be too happy to have my colleagues describe their particular jobs in more detail in future diaries. On to the game...

The *Richard Burns Rally* project has been going for a bit longer than a year now, and I think for this entry I'll try to sum up what has happened up until now. When we were offered to do *Richard Burns Rally* by SCI we naturally jumped at the chance. We were concerned about the competition however, as the shelves of the local games stores are saturated with rally games and their derivatives. How do we deliver another rally game that people will want to play and own? Tricky that, as most of our competitors are established brands with solid fan bases. Where to begin? Well I had played many rally games, but I was still confused as what a rally really was, how does it work?

We really wanted to make the game a simulation, both with regard to the driving experience and the immersion of the rally event in which the player is rallying. With only these vague notions, I and SCI senior producer Peter Hickman went to a rally to have a look and ask some questions. Bingo! We started talking to drivers and

had a good long talk with one particularly friendly driver, at that time unknown to me, David Higgins. He was so open and chummy and basically told me everything about what was going on in his mind before and during the rally. It was a remarkable coincidence, as David Higgins runs the Forest Experience Rally School that we later amalgamated into the game. More about this and further coincidences later.

After talking to Higgins and the other drivers my head was spinning with stuff that just had to be part of the game. A rally is so much more than a fast drive to beat the times of your competitors. For instance, not being able to finish a stage [by getting stuck, suffering a breakdown or crashing etc.] will result in losing the ENTIRE rally - scary stuff! You have to drive tactically, calculate the risks of having an accident against getting a good stage time and always keep the big picture in mind. Your top goal is to score championship points and it is better to be consistent in the season, collecting those vital points, than getting the gold cup from a couple of rallies and then crashing in the third.

So real life rally tactics are in the game, along with AI competitors that suffer accidents, breakdowns and plain bad luck. The AI system has the competitors driving through the stages each time you play; generating new times every time, forcing the player to continually adapt his driving style to the ever-changing circumstances of the rally season.

The real passion for making the game a simulation really started when I got a ride in an A8 rally car; it was really something. It was exiting, fast, terrifying and well, odd, with that 4 wheel drive - sideways sliding going on. It was all new to me.

Naturally we were concerned that going sim might not be for everybody. It might be really hard to drive. What to do? We could not go by other games, as no game so far looked like it was even remotely trying to simulate a real rally car. The answer: go to rally school!

Rally School proved to be the point-of-no-return for going sim. Driving a rally car is so much fun; frightening, and exhilarating. When driving at 'normal' speeds the car is very easy to handle, much like a normal road car - easier than in most



rally games, in fact. Going fast, doing handbrake turns, power slides and such was, well... quite tricky, but so very entertaining and exciting – pure, adrenaline-pumping fun, really.]

So we went home with no doubt about making Richard Burns Rally a true rally simulation – sim rally driving was for everybody. And yes, doing rally techniques took some practice. But when practicing rally driving is this much fun - that's a valuable game play feature in itself. That's how, after very politely asking Mr. Higgins permission, we decided to make The Forest Rally School a central part of the game, with Richard Burns and Robert Reid personally acting as the players' tutors. And wouldn't you know - at the age of 17, Richard started out practicing at the very same rally school. – we could hardly believe it, we even had lady coincidence on our side.

STAGE TWO GRAPHICAL REALISM

As with the driving experience and the rally season, we conducted extensive on-stage searching for the right look for our game, rather than trying to copy the techniques of our competitors. It instantly became apparent that compared to most current rally games, actual rally stages have a lot of detail to them, and that the standard rally road is very much narrower than what is depicted in most rally games today (just take a look at how many cars you can have standing side by side on the road in most rally games and you'll soon get the picture). This road-width anomaly greatly reduces the feeling of speed the player gets when driving and would also lessen the need for using proper rally techniques which would, by default, defeat the purpose of making a rally simulation game.

The unnaturally wide road syndrome also invites players to keep up unrealistically high speeds that will make taking corners very difficult and sending them off sliding stage. Actually, this is a feature in a couple of our US stages, that are REALLY wide, but they are true to life exceptions to the game's generally much narrower rally roads.

As we started to test our first track layouts, we had some trouble getting our car to hug the inside of the corners in a realistic manner. Discussing the car handling with Richard Burns we realized

that what was missing was a higher detail in the modeling of the road surface. Most importantly, the camber of the road.

To get a good feel for the natural geometry and width of rally roads we started investigating and measuring normal Swedish gravel roads, which are basically of the type used for British and Scandinavian rallies. During this field trip we made many interesting insights into the roads that we thought we knew so well. One was the width of the road, and how the corners were generally much wider than the straights, but the biggest one was camber. We were pleased to see that the added camber had the desired effect and impact on the driving experience. Having the car travel across the raised surface of the road as you go from side to side, and being able to "slingshot" around the inside of corners using the camber. Thank you, Romans (or whoever thought of it), for making the roads raised in the middle to let the rainwater run off into ditches.

The positive "camber slingshot" effect, of course, has a downside as well; trying to take a cambered curve on the outside of the camber can just as easily slingshot your car off the stage and into the rough. ("The rough" by the way is another chapter that we considered long and hard for *RBR*. Rally cars are really not made to drive outside of the track and in most rallies "the rough" is really too rough for a rally car to maneuver through, and the cars ending up outside of the track will simply get stuck and need outside help to get pushed or even towed out. This was also put into the game.)

We got so excited we started to camber all our roads. This proved to be a mistake however, as we traveled to each and every rally gathering terrain and texture data we found that almost half of our rallies stages were in fact not cambered. The Arctic stages for instance were ploughed flat before each stage. Most of the Australian and USA stages were also fairly flat, and the stages through Hokkaido's beautiful wildlife reserves used draining grates to lead the water off. We also found that the insides of corners are commonly "dug out" out after countless farmers have cut the corner with their tractors and machinery over the years.

To further the stage realism we also needed to be able to support lots and lots of vegetation by the side of the stages, particularly in Japan's Hokkaido, which is a leafy jungle, and the thickly-forested Gateshead

and Mont Blanc stages. It quickly became apparent that the kind of detail we were looking at would take us about four years to build with present techniques. Not good, as we had about two years.

We ended up building a brand new stage construction tool (named Kangaroo) and constructed a system (called X-tracking) where we could build up areas of high detail vegetation types; forests, meadows, felling areas etc. and feed this into the stage layouts. Camber and other road surface geometry can also be edited in Kangaroo fairly easily thanks to ingenious spline-editing tools. This way we quickly got long stages chock-a-block with detailed vegetation and natural elements. From there on our talented map builders have been spending all their time building up spectator areas, creating pot holes, ruts, tickertape and landscaping, all based on the hundreds of photos and video footage we have collected from our rallies.

GLOBETROTTING AND TEXTURE REFERENCE

I got to go to Nevada, Canberra and Hokkaido myself to gather reference (I know, a dirty job, but someone has to do it – right?), but we generally travel in two man teams, as it is easy for one man to miss something out – and its good to divide up the burden of several cameras, a laptop, food and water for those long wilderness treks. We became fairly well known individuals on the rallies we visited, and could be easily recognizable with our tape measuring the ground and using big sheets suspended by sticks to

“REAL LIFE RALLY TACTICS ARE IN THE GAME, ALONG WITH AI COMPETITORS THAT SUFFER ACCIDENTS AND BREAKDOWNS”

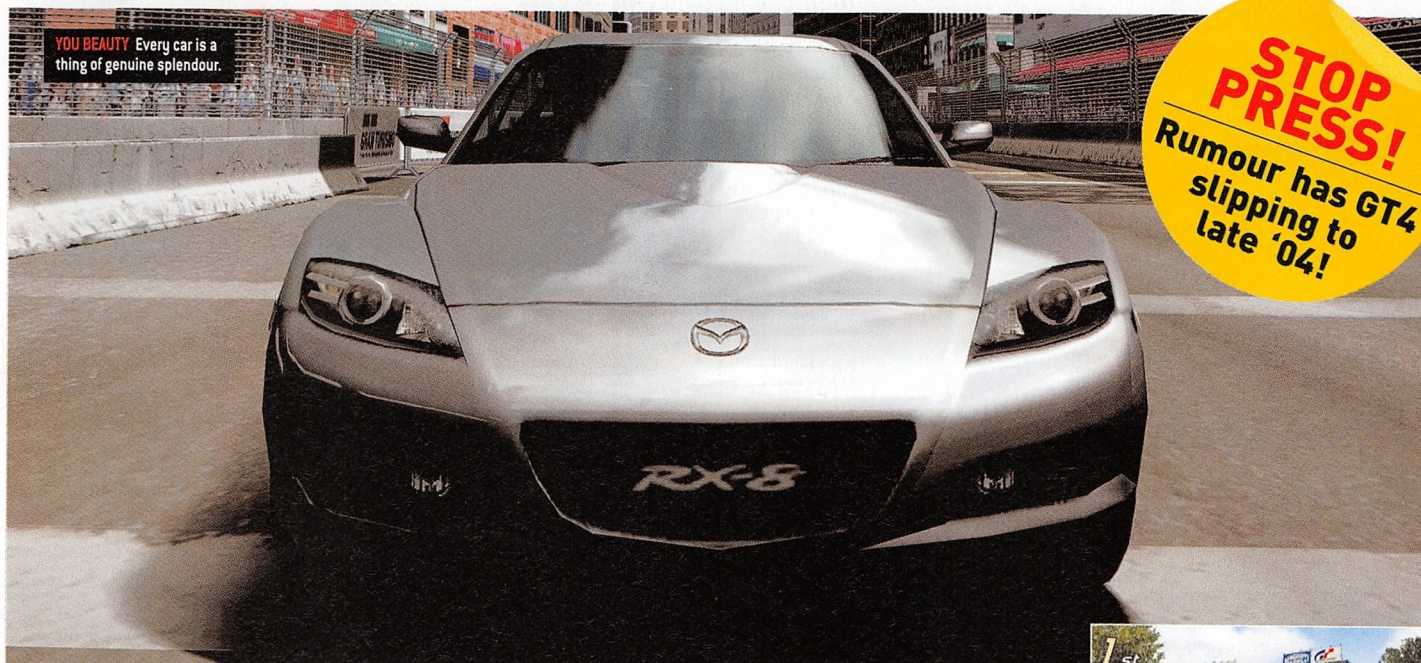
isolate bushes and trees from the background for our texture photography. This (novel?) idea of screening the backgrounds away from trees and bushes saves the texture artists days and days of work as it simplifies making alpha channels and saves them from having to cut out the image of a wanted tree, branches and all, from a picture of a forest by hand - you try it; it's a nightmare. We had a lot of spectators and marshals ask us just what the blazes we were up to, particularly the Japanese were extremely curious. We calmly told them that they had come to our country and photographed just about everything, so now it was our turn to take pictures of everything in Japan!

Expect to hear plenty more about *Richard Burns Rally* in the coming months.



GLOBAL EXTRA >>

ALL THE LATEST ON THE BIGGEST PLAYSTATION2 GAMES ON YOUR SHORT-RANGE RADAR.



YOU BEAUTY Every car is a thing of genuine splendour.

STOP PRESS!
Rumour has GT4 slipping to late '04!

GRAN TURISMO 4

COME WITH US FOR A SHORT DRIVE AROUND HEAVEN. BECAUSE *GRAN TURISMO 4* IS ABOUT TO WHISK US ALL UP TO AMAZING NEW HEIGHTS.

> **PUBLISHER** SONY
> **GENRE** RACING
> **OUT** MID-LATE 2004?!

HERE AT PSW WE USUALLY WRITE OUR CUTE LITTLE words to the sounds of some achingly fashionable band, the one with the hip new sound, pulsing out of one of those fancy iPod thingies. Not anymore. The presence of *Gran Turismo 4* means that all we hear is the sound of massive engines being royally ripped around some gorgeous track or other. Even as we sleep, the rattle of exhausts and the whine of turbos haunt our every dream.

After the heavy disappointment of *R: Racing* (see p.74 this month), we feel the need to reassure you that *Gran Turismo 4* will be all that in a party hat, if not some kind of extravagant crown the size of Denmark made entirely from solid gold, covered in diamonds and then painted black. Just imagine driving whichever of the 500 hot and sexy cars makes you dampest down there. It's more than mortal flesh can bear. And as for the courses, well, let's just say they're plentiful and beautiful.

But rumour this month suggests that we won't be seeing our precious until the fourth quarter (that is, October). It's totally unconfirmed, but with *Gran Turismo*, we all know any slippage, no matter how frustrating, cannot be ruled out. Try holding PSW for comfort. We will remain your primary *GT4* source until the game hits. We just pray we're wrong... More next month.



ITALIAN JOB The narrow street course is well tough.

SCORCHING The faster cars can be a real handful.

"BRILLIANT IN EVERY WAY."

ATOMIC

"AS ADRENALINE-PUMPING AS ANYTHING YOU'D SEE ON THE SILVER SCREEN."

★★★★★ GAMESPY

"STUNNING...MAX PAYNE 2 IS JUST A REMARKABLE PRODUCTION."

EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD. GAMESPOT



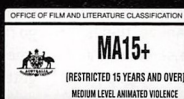
MAX PAYNE™ 2

THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

A FILM NOIR LOVE STORY

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MAXPAYNE2

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PlayStation 2



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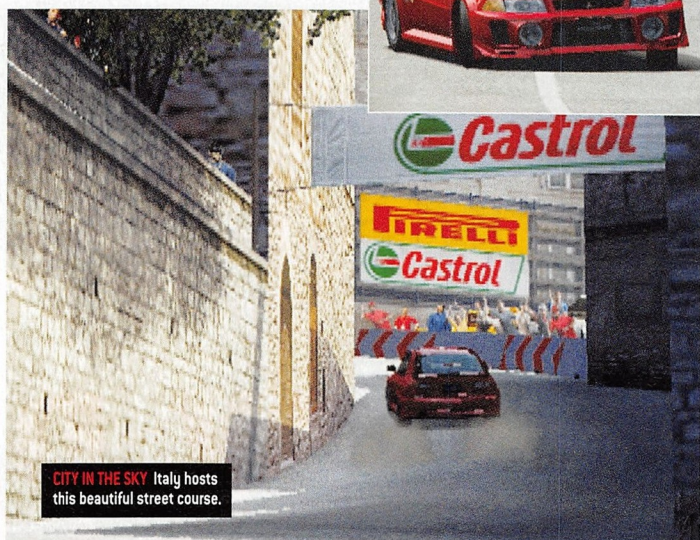
EXTRA GRUNT The GT cars are hugely powerful.



HELMETS Open-top cars let you see your driver.



VIPER The American monster is as fast as ever.



CITY IN THE SKY Italy hosts this beautiful street course.

FOURPLAY

HERE ARE A FEW OF THE MORE EXTREME BEASTIES YOU CAN EXPECT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON. SCREAMING ENGINES AND TYRES AS WIDE AS FRANCE, THESE CARS PUT THE GT IN GT.



>> XANAVI NISIMO GT-R

Massively wide, massively powerful monster, faster than God shot from a cannon, barely fit for human consumption. Looks like it's in a really bad mood with your eyes, sounds like it's in a really bad mood with your ears and handles like it's in a really bad mood with the finishing line. In a really bad mood.



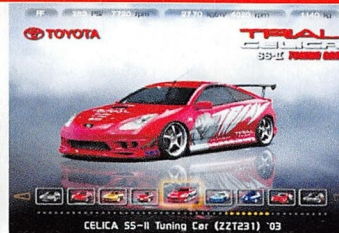
>> CUSCO SUBARU ADVAN IMPREZA

A Subaru that hasn't been turned into a rally car? One of the most shocking things ever, we're sure you'll agree but this is as fine a machine as man is fit to demand. Exhibits huge power, is as light as a bulimic feather and responds to your inputs just before you make them. No, really.



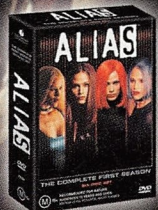
>> TAKATA DOME NSX '03

If you mix together the sperm of the devil, some supercar and the Japanese, this is what you get. It's fast in the same way as explosions, nasty in the same way as the Dark Ages and has a huge pipe on the back. This probably serves the sort of purpose that we dare not even consider.



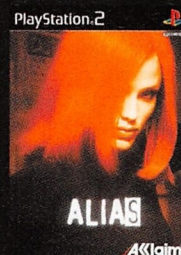
>> TRIAL CELICA SS-II TUNING CAR

Filled with missiles and cheetahs to make it go faster. Now it's little more than a four-wheeled speed whore, interested only in getting you inside it as quickly as possible, getting you where you want to go as quickly as possible and then getting you out of it as quickly as possible.



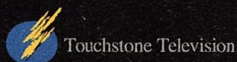
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PlayStation 2



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DIALOGUE

THE PART OF THE MAGAZINE YOU WRITE, THEN WE TYPE IT UP IN THE CONDUIT ITC FONT AND PUBLISH IT ALL.



FREE MONEY! LOL! ROFL!

You may be surprised to receive this email since you do not know me. I am the son of the late president of Democratic Republic Of Zaire, President Mobutu Sese Seko, (now The Republic of Congo, under the leadership of the son of Mr Laurent Kabila). I presume you are aware there is a financial dispute between my family (THE MOBUTUS) and the present civilian Government. This is based on what they believe as bad and corrupt governance on my late father's part. May his soul rest in perfect peace. As you might have heard how a lot of my father's bank accounts in Switzerland and North America have been frozen. Following the above-named reasons, I am soliciting for your humble and confidential assistance to take custody of THIRTY million United States Dollars (US\$30,000,000.00), also to front for me in the areas of business you desire profitable.

These funds have secretly been deposited into a confidential Security Company, where it can easily be withdrawn or paid to a recommended beneficiary. The funds will be released to you by the Security Company, based on my recommendations. On that note, you will be presented as my partner who will be fronting for me and my family in any subsequent ventures. Myself and my mother have decided to give 20% to you if you are able to help us claim this consignment.

We have also decided to give you any money spent on phone calls or travelling expenses in the course of this transaction at the end of the transaction. Please, I need your entire support and co-operation for the success of this transaction, your utmost confidentiality and secrecy is highly required, due to my family's present predicament. I sincerely will appreciate your willingness to assist us as soon as possible. I am presently in the refugee camp here in the Netherlands under the United Nations refugee camp in Netherlands. All correspondence must be by my email address bashe3@yehey.com and you can also call me on this telephone number 0031-629-312-239 for more information on how we can proceed in this transaction. Please indicate your interest by sending your telephone

and fax number. I sincerely will appreciate your acknowledgement as soon as possible.

Warmest regards, Bashe Mobutu Sese-Seko, via email

We've forwarded you Joff Brown's email address. He's always asking for a couple of bucks. Particularly around lunchtime. Do any other readers have US\$30,000,000.00 they need help distributing?

HOME IMPROVEMENT

I have been reading a lot of stuff about network gaming, but I need to know more about how to actually use it! I have a broadband connection and a PlayStation2 (obviously, otherwise I was fond of random magazine buying) so is the network adapter all I really need? Do I have to reconfigure my house so I can get the PC and the broadband connection closer to my PS2? Basically, help! Can you do a nice article letting all the nice people know how to use Network Play? Thanks in advance.

Peter, via email

Yes, you will need to reconfigure your house. The default house configuration [PS2 in lounge, PC in bedroom] isn't ideal due to PS2's requirement of an Ethernet socket for online play. Unless you want bright blue cables trailing all over the place, some sort of redesigned lounge that places your console nearer your broadband modem is required. Let's call this House Configuration B. We could start talking about wireless routers, but nobody wants that.



IT'S TRUE. I READ IT ON THE NET

I have a friend who owns an Xbox and I keep trying to tease him about his poor console choice. Take today, for example. I said to him PS2 has more top-drawer games than Xbox, which he conceded was true (even Bill Gates knows that) but when I go on and extend the teasing, all he says is "it's more powerful," and I can't think of anything witty yet factual back. So far all I've got is "shut up you tramp" and walking away. Can

SEND YOUR THOUGHTS TO:
Dialogue, PSW,
78 Renwick St,
Redfern NSW 2016
Australia.
OR...
psw@next.com.au

PSW help me with things to verbally assault him with? Mickey-taking of controllers?

Domatude, via email

We assume you've already thoroughly questioned his sexuality, so let's not even bother offering such basic advice. For advanced insulting we suggest turning to the internet. Say you stumbled across a survey – carried out by 'scientists' – which suggests that a majority of Xbox owners have to have their bananas mashed for them. Mashed finely enough they have to be sucked up through a straw. No one ever checks 'facts' from the internet. You could even make a page and 'stumble' across it while your friend is there, for the ultimate in fooling.

WE DO A MAGAZINE TOO.

LET'S BE FRIENDS

Me and my friends have been doing a magazine just inside school. We do it just for fun not for the money, and we were wondering how do you get all the pictures? Also how do you get the games that aren't even out – do you have like chipped PS2s or something to get copied games? This is something I've been wondering about for a long time. And how did you get in the shops? Thanks, love the mag.

Lee Fieldhouse (and friends), via email

We'd need to take quite a while to properly fill you in there. These are the basics. Screenshots are taken on a PC with a fancy graphics card, games come from PR companies that want us to promote them, and we play them on MAGIC consoles sent to us by Sony that we call Test machines. Then we send it all off to printers who print it. The rest we don't really know ourselves. We imagine there's a big factory with lots of magazines in, then lots of lorries (or maybe vans) come and take them to newsagents. That can't be a fun job.

BILL, IT'S OVER

Once again, your magazine brings me happiness. The news that Microsoft's 'console' has had another game snatched from its grubby mitts (*OutRun 2*) is such a good Christmas present. With blow after blow landing on Bill Gates and his band of minions, surely it is only a matter of time before he realises that the almighty dollar can't beat the almighty grace of PlayStation2? When this day comes, it will be the shining light of PSW and its readers that will lead the party.

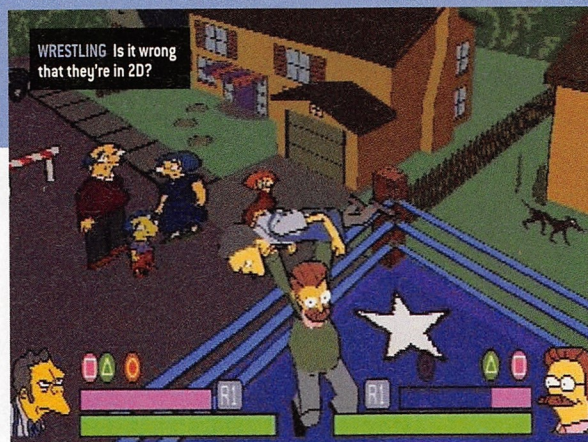
Iain Macintyre

Bill Gates, if you're reading this, all it takes is one letter. Send us one formal, handwritten apology and we'll forget this whole 'Xbox' situation ever happened and go back to being friends again. We know you've got enough money to actually buy all human life on this

planet ten times over, but it's just not working. No one wants your stupid box, no one wants the pain of organising a lorry to carry its hideous bulk back from the shops and society still hasn't accepted that green is a colour for anything other than mouldy food. Come on, Bill, stop messing about with that ugly green thing. You're just making yourself look stupid. There's no shame in admitting you've made a mistake. Come, join us on the happy console of love!

THE FALL OF THE SIMPSONS

What have they done? *The Simpsons* is a great show, but for some reason game publishers and all the other low lives have decided to destroy what Matt Groening and all those other brave souls have built over the years. The situation has gone from being funny to something that makes you want to put your controller through your TV screen. Like the most recent game, *Hit & Run*, with their lifeless eyes, 3D bodies that look like tin cans and a storyline that was written by a five year old! It wasn't always like this. I remember a time before PS2 or even PSone. A time when



Super Nintendo was all the rage. Back then there were two *Simpsons* games that you could really get into and still have a good belly laugh or two. One was the game where you played as Bart walking around in a dream trying to avoid Lisa (the fairy) who would turn you into a frog. And then there was that grandma that would kiss you. Phewee. If you were beaten up enough or you got stuck somewhere you would wake up from the dream. What a classic. The other game was the one where you once more played as Bart who while walking around the school science fair



would get stuck in a virtual reality machine. Then you could be and do all kinds things. [Sorry I can't remember the games.] What happened? Have we become so dependent on 3D graphics and the latest sound effects that we forgot the reason people started creating/playing video games? Maybe I'm just an old fool... 19 going on 20, making my way over the gaming hill. Look, if they are going to keep doing this they should look back to where it all started. Maybe then they can bring back the true spirit of *Simpsons* gaming for the next generation.

Aaron Gibson, via email

It is one of the great travesties of gaming. Such a potent license so drastically mishandled, so consistently. Honestly though, *Hit & Run* was the best *Simpsons* game for some time.

And on the 7th day he didn't rest,

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FEATURE

KILLZONE





KILLZONE

> GENRE ACTION
> DEVELOPER GUERRILLA
> PUBLISHER SONY
> OUT NOVEMBER
> ONLINE YES

EVERYONE WANTED TO PLAY *KILLZONE*, BUT NOBODY KNEW WHY... UNTIL NOW. PSW EXPLAINS WHY 2004'S MOST ANTICIPATED GAME LIVES UP TO THE HYPE.

KILLZONE IN EARLY 2004 IS THE BEATLES IN 1961. IT'S US SOCCER PHENOMENON

Freddy Adu banging in hat-tricks during school matches against sobbing, quivering goalkeepers, who stand like a matchstick in the path of a hurricane, waiting to be blown away. In short, it's a thick swamp of hype, inside which *The Next Big Thing* sits, greased and ready to uncoil. Everybody knows that Sony's heavily anticipated action clout is going to be big, but just how big might that be?

Having spent an unforgettable 24 hours in its company, PSW can finally provide the definitive answer: *Killzone* is going to be humungous. At first you think it's just standard large – a game the size of a small country that you could lose yourself in for months at a time. And then it stands up, and you realise, as you crane your neck back and adjust to the light in its shadow, that *Killzone* has the potential to be the biggest game of 2004. Perhaps the biggest and most important PlayStation2 game of all time. Only we can say this with any degree of certainty, because only we've played it until it screamed at us to stop. Believe us, no one has experienced the full intensity of *Killzone* quite like we have. Our eyes are still so dry

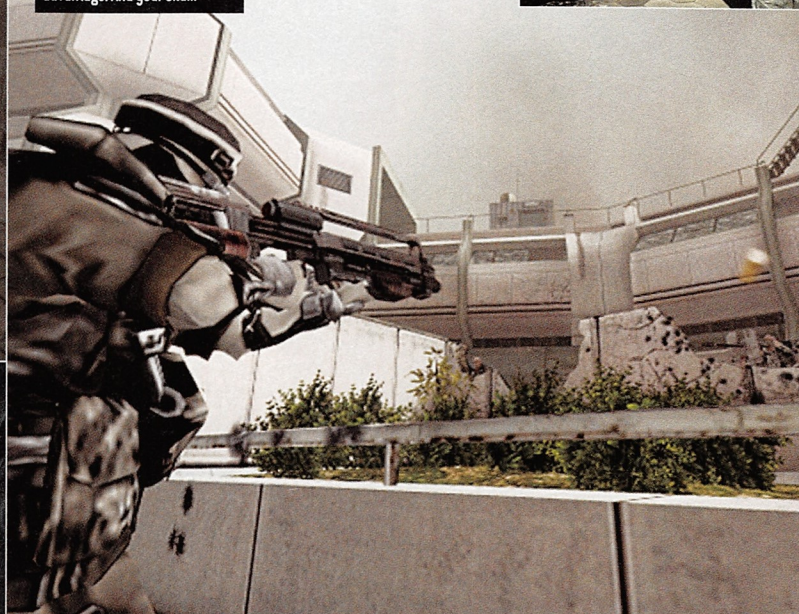




REAL LIFE It's like the everyday world got turned upside down.



HEADS DOWN Or you'll lose your advantage. And your skull.



WATCH OUT When it all gets quiet, look out for an ambush.



"THE POTENTIAL TO BE THE BIGGEST PLAYSTATION2 GAME OF ALL TIME."

that we're having to manually blink by hauling our eyelids down like fleshy window blinds before slowly rolling them back up.

Before we go any further, a brief return to the basics. Though much has been written about *Killzone* over the previous six months, precious little has been said of the actual premise, so here it is, in its simplest form: war. Proper war. Not pretend war, or watered-down half-war. No game in the history of consoles – not even *Medal of Honor: Frontline* – has ever come this close to replicating the sick-making sensation that (we assume) accompanies the trembling march into battle.

We reach this conclusion as we charge through a greenish slum, gun in hand, grimace on face, in a scene that recalls the American misadventure in war-torn Mogadishu, as recreated in *Black Hawk Down*. Along with our three team-mates, we painstakingly work our way towards our mission objective, which appears to be housed inside a derelict shopping centre. *Killzone* lesson number one: be prepared to fight for each and every inch of territory. Clearing the first street of guards is no easy task. Often the opposition seek cover if they feel threatened, encouraging you to move in and thus making your own position extremely vulnerable.

Our first engagement with the enemy passes in a blur of excitement, adrenaline, death and noise. It's chaotic. It's confusing. It's everything

conflict should be. By which we mean an unsettling blend of the horrible, the satisfying and the unknown. Where other games go to extreme lengths to make you feel as though you're always in complete command of the action, *Killzone* is savvy enough to realise that nothing thrills quite like the sensation of losing control. For more on that, climb into the anti-aircraft gun. The fact that this huge steel emplacement doesn't respond to your every command, that it feels slow and unwieldy, only increases the sensation that you're strapped into a seriously powerful piece of military equipment. Hold the fire button down and the cannon at first ignores you, taking a second or two to respond. Release the fire button and the barrel keeps on spitting bullets, stopping in its own sweet time.

Which leads us onto *Killzone* lesson number two: allow yourself to be taken along for the ride. Resign yourself to the fact that you will never tame this rabid action beast. At times it drives you, not the other way around. A standard *Killzone* shoot-out has you fighting through swathes of smoke, shooting at faint outlines as your machine-gun violently recoils, throwing your body into a spasm. Just succumb to the randomness and don't stop shouting until everyone else has stopped breathing.

This sense of mayhem and disorder is one of many uniquely shaped birthmarks that allow you to easily distinguish between *Killzone* and Standard First-Person Shooter. The fact you're never given a firm handle





ATTENTION TO DETAIL Every last surface is perfectly mapped.



GUNS BLAZING These weapons fire bullets, not made-up lasers.



BURN BABY BURN The theatre of war is no playground in *Killzone*.



FOG OF WAR It may be the future, but war is still definitely hell.



HAZED AND CONFUSED Try not to shoot any of your own men here.

on the action playing out in front of you only increases the sense that you're physically involved in the game, as does the clever use of the game camera to simulate movement. Reload your weapon and your character swivels his head to find the ammo, then discards the used clip and rams in a replacement. Vault over a wall and your character will look down and plant a hand on it before leaping.

The intelligence of the opposition is the next thing to impress us about *Killzone*; it's abundantly clear from the outset that these guards aren't going to lie down and play nice. Later, a tour of the studio will take us into the lair of the coders whose job it is to work full-time on the Artificial Intelligence of the enemy guards. They'll amaze us by setting up a shoot-out against two teams of guards, which will automatically play out as we sit and watch. The outcome is to be different each and every time they run the battle. By the fifth round we're acting as bookmaker and taking bets on which side is going to win.

As we catch our breath back in the ghetto, the orchestral score – an intimidating Nazi stomp recorded, to threatening effect, by the Russian Philharmonic – swells in the background, a sure-fire indication that something awful is about to happen. It does. A huge drop-ship fills the sky, sprouting rope legs as it descends. Six troops slide down each of the four tentacles and begin firing. We're in serious trouble. *Killzone*





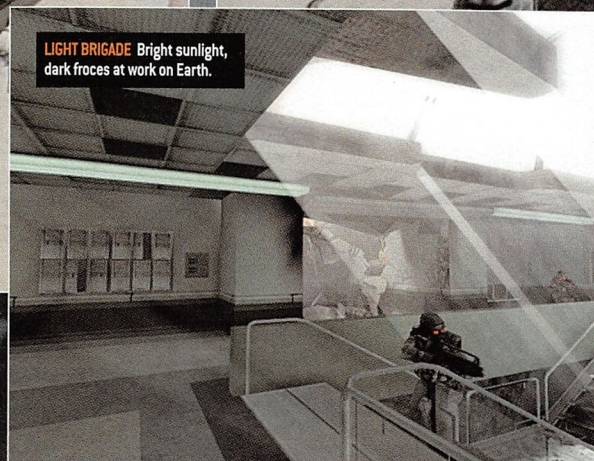
"WEAPONS ARE MORE IMPORTANT IN THE KILLZONE UNIVERSE THAN FOOD OR OXYGEN."



NO MESSING Soldiers in *Killzone* look like they mean business.



MALLED TO DEATH Locations are unsettlingly familiar and broken.



LIGHT BRIGADE Bright sunlight, dark forces at work on Earth.

lesson number three: never panic. You'll frequently find yourself horribly outgunned and with ammunition in short supply. All you can do is retreat to a position of cover and work with your allies to clear the area in a piecemeal fashion.

With regards to your team-mates, the developer took the decision very early on not to allow you to influence their actions at all. The thinking behind this is that a system of orders – cover me, stay here, hold fire – would significantly lessen the impact of a game that deals in cartoonish smacks to the face. They wanted to keep things simple and immediate. With this in mind, they've made your allies clever enough to look after themselves. Only once you've moved into battle will they join you, following close behind and mopping up any puddles of conflict that you choose to step over. It's in your interest to keep them fit and healthy, as an injured buddy is less effective and less likely to bail you out of a tight spot. And we all know how much harder things can be without that extra friend in tow. Like betting your brother you won't use your right hand all day. Harder, yet not impossible. Trust us, you don't need harder. Harder should be avoided like a cuddle with your semi-aroused uncle. As an aside, we love the fact that, in the heat of battle, it's often difficult to distinguish between who's on your side and who isn't. The lack of any icons to

distinguish friend from foe forces you to think twice before shooting.

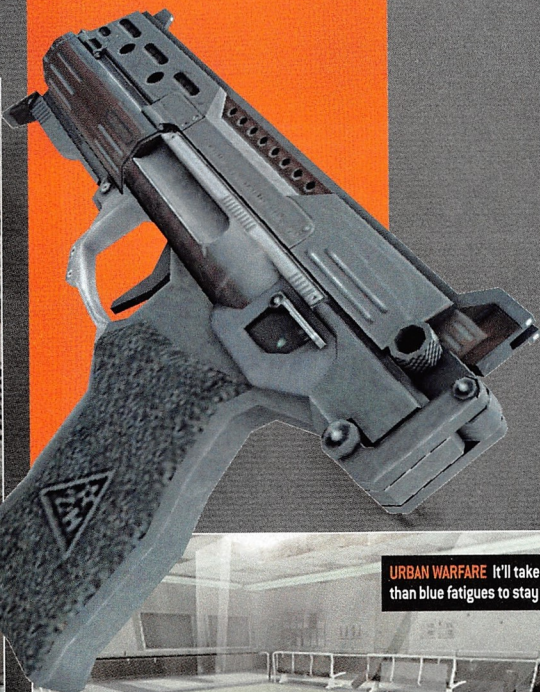
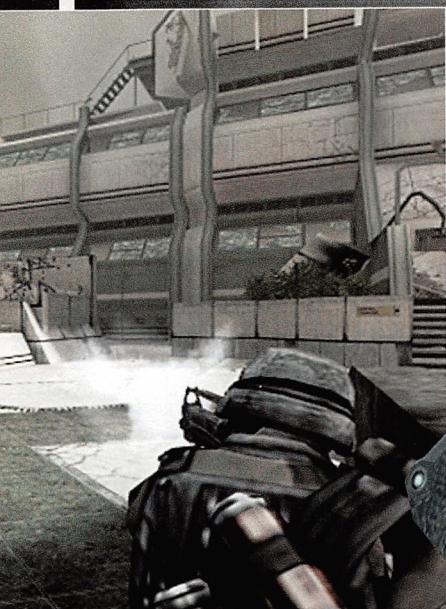
The other members of your squad aren't just there for show. Between each mission you're given the opportunity to select which of the four characters you'd like to take control of for the forthcoming mission. Alliances are forged over the course of the first hour or so of play. You begin with just one soldier, a walking hard-on whose all-round ability – moderately fast, able to handle the moderately big weapons, moderately tough – marks him out as the default character you'll return to throughout the game when searching for a friendly, familiar face. Next you'll come upon Stealthy Woman (a temporary name of our own creation), who's adept at both hiding in the shadows and causing distractions. We've been reassured that stealth represents a very small cog within the vast smoke-and-noise-making *Killzone* contraption, and that emphasis is very much on hurting things rather than sneaking past them. This makes us feel like your semi-aroused uncle as he presses his pocket passenger into your thigh. In a word: happy.

The third member of your crew is a fat man with a love of heavy weaponry. Each of the 22 guns in the game (more on these later) handles differently, depending on which of the characters you're playing as. Stealthy Woman is inaccurate and ineffective with the chain gun; Fat Man tosses it around like a peanut in zero gravity. The fourth and final ally is yet to be confirmed. Expect him to be either a sniper or an explosives expert. (Please note: all *PSW* predictions are based on nothing more than gut feelings and hopeful speculation.)

Now seems like as good a time as any to tell you about the story. Thankfully this won't take long because *Killzone* is based around the perfectly sound principle that action games should be about shooting people, not shooting the breeze. It's a period of planetary colonisation. Earth has been divided into the loyalists (you = good) and the separatists (the Helghast = bad). A large-scale invasion of Helghast warriors looking to claim your home planet leads you into the jaws of a suicide mission. So it is that you and your cronies must find a way to break through the massed ranks of Nazi-faced invaders in the vain hope



WHO'S THERE? Every corner holds new terrors. Hold tight!



URBAN WARFARE It'll take more than blue fatigues to stay safe.



of finding a weak spot and sparing the lives of your comrades.

Cut-sequences are to be kept short and to the point, often acting more as two-minute breaks from the action than heavyweight narrative updates. We've also been promised that the final version will be completely loading time-free, meaning that once you've been sucked in through *Killzone*'s snarling mouth, its cast iron action teeth won't have stopped hammering down on you until your brain has been thoroughly digested and your withered carcass crapped out the other end. There's to be no let-up, from explosive start to devastating finish.

IF LOOKS COULD KILL

The *Killzone* phenomenon so far has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that, in the mirrored-ceiling world of the video game, looks do matter. Gamers the world over were ready to proclaim this an instant classic a couple of months back based on nothing more than a couple of screenshots and a pinch of blind faith. It turns out they were right all along, but that's beside the point.

HELL ON EARTH

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE HELGHAST MENACE.



WHAT'S THAT? This fellow right here is a member of the Elite Helghast guard. He's like a basic grunt, only he can withstand extremes of punishment.

HOW DO I STOP IT? Don't get too close. Elite guards carry high-powered weaponry. You're best off keeping your distance and dispatching him with a well-aimed grenade.



WHAT'S THAT? An armored personnel carrier. Vehicles like this often glide into view just as you think you've completely cleared your immediate area.

HOW DO I STOP IT? You can't. Your only hope is that the number of bullets left in your rifle roughly corresponds with the number of Helghast crouching inside the APC.



WHAT'S THAT? An assault boat, again used for the transportation of large numbers of troops. As soon as you see that insignia, best run for cover.

HOW DO I STOP IT? Bit tricky this one. Rockets are probably your best bet, though even they might struggle to dent this impressively muscular machine.

IN THE ZONE | KILLZONE STRIPPED DOWN TO ITS KEY COMPONENTS.



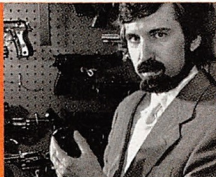
10% HALO

As much as we hate to admit it, this, the only decent Xbox title has had more than a passing influence on *Killzone*. It's *Halo*, only much better. And much louder too.



10% TEAMWORK

Both the single and the multiplayer modes revolve around teamwork. You're never alone in *Killzone*. Good job too, because getting out alive is tougher than old donkey meat.



10% GUNS

Killzone has more guns than you'll ever need, from silenced pistols and chain guns to sniper rifles and enormous wall-mounted cannons. Mmm... enormous wall-mounted cannons...



20% VIETNAM WAR

Stalk through these jungles and you'll discover exactly why it is those 'Nam veterans are still banging on about the killing fields of Cambodia to this day.



20% WORLD WAR II

Though set very much in the future, *Killzone* is full of references to the Second World War. Just look at those Helghast. They're just like Nazis, but less blonde and with bigger guns.



30% MOVIES

The setting is one part *Minority Report*, two parts *Starship Troopers*, three parts *The Thin Red Line* and four parts *Judge Dredd*. With a tiny bit of *Tron* for good measure.



ONE FOR ALL You won't stand alone - allies can aid your cause.



INTERIOR DAMAGE And you can only make it far, far worse.



IT'S A BLAST Combat will often seem out of your control.

Thankfully, the graphics are no longer the most impressive thing about *Killzone* – the gameplay is – but the visuals remain a cut above anything you've seen on your PS2 up to the present day. The jungle is dense and lush, the shrubs dancing in time to the rhythm of the breeze as you stand and shiver and wonder from which direction the Helghast troopers are coming from next. To keep play focused the environments are fairly linear, saving you the discomfort of ever having to swallow brick-shaped, 20-minute-sized chunks of aimless wandering.

The other levels we've seen – the slums and shopping centre mentioned earlier, a mountainous stretch of jungle and an upmarket downtown area – are equally as vibrant and as atmospheric as this vast expanse of greenery. Often it's not until you take the time to poke around a given environment that you realise just how rich the detail is, from the water coolers that perforate and spin through the air once fired upon, to the foul-smelling water in the marshland that ripples and splashes as you charge through it thinking of Vietnam.


We really should tell you about the guns, weapons being more important than food or oxygen in the *Killzone* universe. Having leafed through mountains and mountains of blueprints and design documents during our visit to the developer, it's plain to us that a terrifying amount of thought and research has gone into the game's arsenal. The first thing to be aware of here is that – with the exception of the rocket launchers – each of the 22 guns fires standard bullets. Forget lasers, forget electro-

magnetic pulse rifles, forget green death ray; *Killzone's* guns are soaked in the stenchy bile of the real world. Like the story, the vehicles and the environments, the guns are solid and believable. Screw science fiction. Screw it from behind with an invisible test tube. *Killzone* is science fact. Everything you see here could happen one day. If something goes horribly wrong, that is.

The only possible exception to the 'science fiction sucks' rule is our favourite weapon so far: the rocket launcher. This comes fitted with a magnificently extravagant laser-sight function. Once you've fired your missile it's possible to change its direction by moving the small red dot, a function that is sure to come in handy when confronting large targets that won't sit still – tanks, drop-ships, that kind of thing. We should point out at this stage that you won't be piloting any of the Helghast vehicles.



TWIN TOWERS Showing just how close to the bone *Killzone* can get, here's a sequence of Helghast fighters destroying one of a pair of towering monuments. Make no mistake, this is total war.



BLAZE OF GLORY You can almost feel the recoil from the weapons.

KILLER LINE

KILLZONE IN THE WORDS OF THOSE WHO'VE RAISED IT FROM SPERM TO HULKING MANIAC.

"Our first step was to research all the different types of conflict to decide which direction the game was going to go in. We discovered very early on that we found all of them interesting. We wanted to use the trench battles from World War I, the jungle warfare from Vietnam, the Normandy landings from World War II, Stalingrad, and so on. What we did after this was to create our own war, and to then base it around 20th-century conflicts."

Martin de Ronde, commercial director, on the historical influences that shaped Killzone

"We tried to make the game look dirty. We wanted the vehicles and the environments to look really rough and worn down."

Roland Ijzermans, concept artist, on the visual tone of Killzone

"It's important that your team-mates don't have all the fun. You don't want to stand back and watch as your computer-controlled buddy clears the entire area. We've made sure that the emphasis is on you to steer your group effectively. You're also the prime target."


Martin Capel, lead designer, on the squad system

"With the guns, we wanted to stay as far away from science fiction as possible – which meant no green blobs, no lasers. We want guns that feel real, that feel like actual weapons when you're firing them."

Roy Postma, lead concept artist, on the thinking behind the weapons

"The player can go off exploring, but what we don't want is for them to get lost or reach a dead end. The final stage of the level design is to add landmarks that will help you find your way around the map. Again, it's this idea of keeping the action moving forwards at all times."


Martin Capel, lead designer, on the level design



OUTLOOK IS BLEAK Gird yourself for some chilling, thrilling play.



GREY CORRIDORS But this is far from your standard shooter.



HUNT THEM DOWN Guerilla warfare is tense and disturbing.

"VISUALS ARE A CUT ABOVE ANYTHING ELSE ON PS2."

Do we spy an opening for a sequel?

That's as much as we – or anyone in the world, for that matter – knows about *Killzone* at present. The only aspect of the game that developer Guerrilla won't talk about is the multiplayer. We know it's definitely online and we know that the maps will be specifically designed for online play. The rest is pure speculation. [We're anticipating a four-way co-operative mode, along with large-scale multiplayer battles peopled mainly by PS2-controlled bots.]

If we're honest, we're not massively bothered about the multiplayer game at present. Maybe one day, when it's all up and running and enough players in Australia have secured the level of internet access required to make for a busy and competitive online community, we'll think differently. But right now we're so completely absorbed in the prospect of single-player *Killzone* that to even consider anything else seems like a terrible waste of precious anticipation.

The important thing to take away from this world exclusive playtest is that PS2's wait for a truly unforgettable, truly legendary shooter is at long last drawing to a close. Xbox owners are soon to be silenced. *Halo* is weeks away from been bound, gagged, stripped, beaten and humiliated in a brutal and mildly sexual fashion. Stay with us for a grandstand view.

/ JON BROWN

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE!**
**NO OTHER MAG
HAS PLAYED
THIS!**

> GENRE	ACTION
> DEVELOPER	REFLECTIONS INTERACTIVE
> PUBLISHER	ATARI
> OUT	MARCH
> ONLINE	NO

DRIVER 3. TRY SAYING THAT WITH US:

"Duh-rhi-vah-thuh-ree." Trips off the tongue no problem, eh? Well scrap all that because Atari now want you to call it *Driv3r*. Huh? What? Yup, that's just as retarded as it looks and sounds – a game this good doesn't need any tragic spelling gimmicks to make it work. But if you insist on spelling it like that, then it's pronounced like this: "Duh-rhi-v-three-uh-r." Which sounds dumb as hell. But there you go – that's marketing for you. Maybe we're getting too old and we just don't understand. Now, where did we put our pipe and slippers?

But let's forget the syntactic clowning and talk cars. Cars beating up other cars. Cars beating up innocent café tables and chairs left incautiously outside. And cars getting beaten up by men with guns. *Driv3r* is nothing if not fair-minded when it comes to violence. But before we go any deeper into the underworld, let's get something clear. We've said it before and we'll say it again, because it's an easy mistake to make: *Driv3r* is not, repeat not, a free-roaming crime game like *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. It is, as Reflections' boss Martin Edmonson has been trying to tell us for quite literally years, a game about car chases. A game whose sole purpose is to give you the closest possible experience to stealing a Ford Escort 1.6 RSi, ramming it into a wall very fast, and then running away before the fuzz turn up. It's a crazed, heart-stopping beast of a car chase game that seems to resemble the original *Driver* more than anything else. It's a series of car chases, on-foot running and shooting missions set over three expansive cities. Not just another tarted-up, crime-based adventure game like *Vice City*. It's action all the way, baby. You should be thankful.

KNOW YOUR HISTORY

Fans of Reflections' PSone games might remember that it all went a bit wrong with *Driver 2*. It wasn't a bad game by most standards, but it was abundantly clear that when it came to the PSone's technical limits, *Driver 2* bit off more than it could chew. In fact it not only bit off more than it could chew, it swallowed the lot and was then violently sick outside Youseff Al-Polygon's all-night kebab van. Sure, it was admirably ambitious, introducing out-of-car running and shooting, and implementing a whole new style of curvaceous roads. But it suffered from more jerk than a Jamaican chicken restaurant and looked fuzzier than Colin Farrell's tongue after a night on absinthe and coke. What it mostly did is teach the *Driver* team a salutary lesson about being organised, about being able to implement their fantastic ideas. For example, they actually spent most of the early years of this decade concocting *Stuntman*, the driving-trick simulator. *Stuntman* wasn't perfect as a game [7/10, PSW 31]. Many would argue that it wasn't even great, thanks to endless time spent reloading, and a heinously demanding stunt system. But nobody was wailing about the quality of the car physics, the classic *Driver*-style handbrake turning or the exquisitely modelled cars.

Well, now we can tell you what we've always known, and what you've always guessed: *Stuntman* was but a test drive, a dry >>

> RACE TO THE DEATH

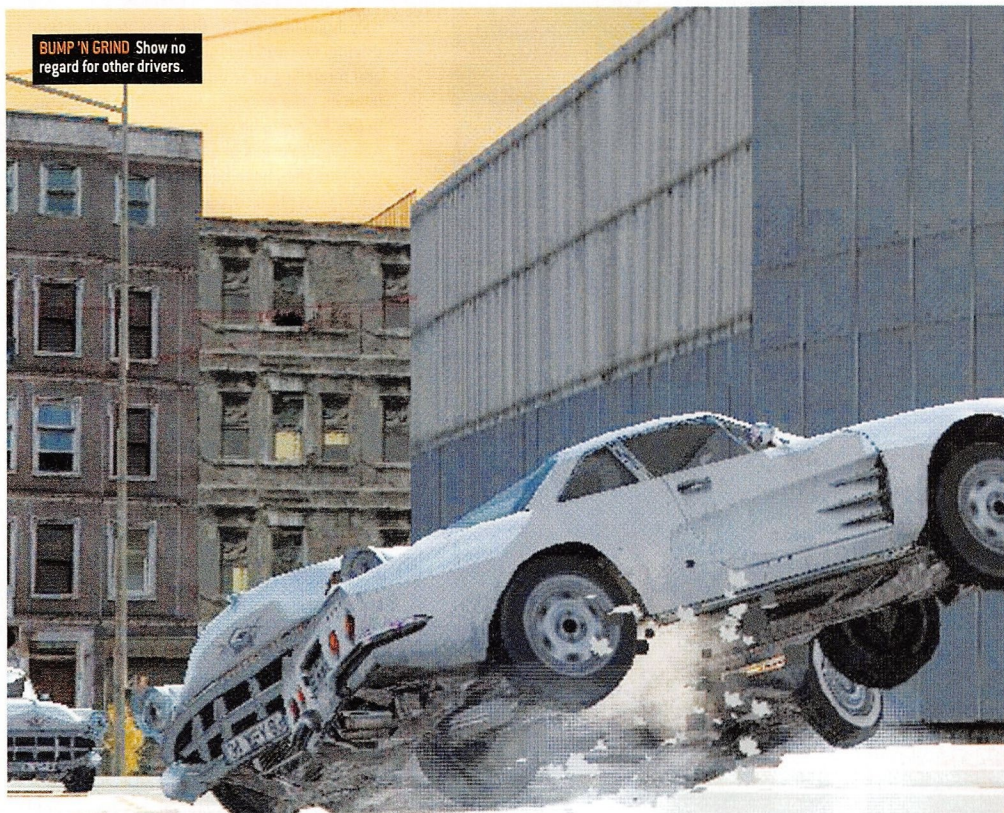
Even a flying car and a truck steaming towards him doesn't surprise Tanner these days.

"IT'S A CRAZED, HEART-STOPPING BEAST OF A CAR CHASE GAME."

DRIV3R

AH, THE OPEN ROAD. AND THE UNLOCKED CAR. *DRIV3R* BRINGS THEM TOGETHER IN WAYS THAT WILL HAVE YOUR BRAIN REELING.

BUMP 'N GRIND Show no regard for other drivers.



IT WAS ALL YELLOW You can feel the burning heat.

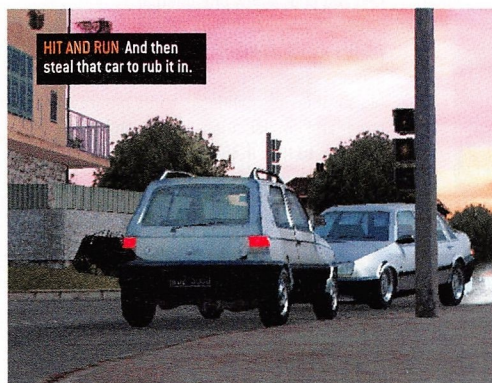


#01 THINGS TO DO IN DRIV3R STEAL A CAR



Some things don't change – any car you see on the street, you can steal. Expect to change cars mid-chase at moments of extreme tension when you're being hunted down, or when you want to put enemies off your scent. Or because it's cool.

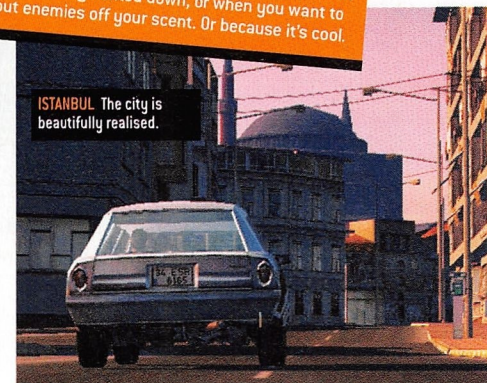
HIT AND RUN And then steal that car to rub it in.



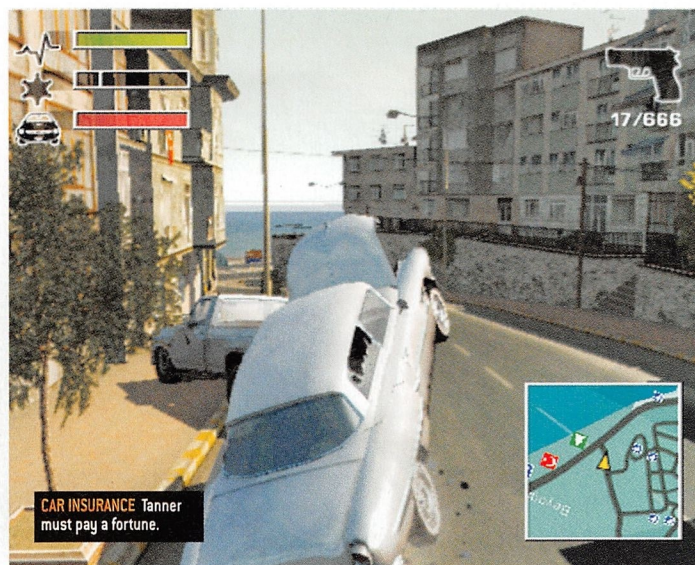
SHORTCUT Go off-road in Nice's open countryside.



ISTANBUL The city is beautifully realised.



NO BOATENG Tanner is dressed down for Driv3r.



CAR INSURANCE Tanner must pay a fortune.



DRIV3R FACT!

>SCREECH FOR THE STARS

If you brake and accelerate at the same time, it's possible to pop endos on the motorbikes.

>BUDDY COPS

Ving Rhames plays Tobias Jones, and you'll even be able to play him in a few select missions.

>GET SHOT UP

Shotguns, machine guns and pistols are some of the eight weapons you'll get to play with.

>LAZY DOG

When asked why he likes doing voiceover work, Michael Madsen replied that he didn't have to shave.



CRASH CLASSICS Nothing is safe in *Driv3r*.



STREET WHALE It's not all sports cars and bikes.



GET A REAL JOB Tanner terrorises hippies.



TAXI! 'Sorry mate, I don't go south of the river.'

run, if you like, for the *Driv3r* school of action driving. And despite the impressive physics and modelling of *Stuntman*, *Reflections* has used its time wisely to further buff things up. In *Driv3r*, every bit of the car has been modelled to break in exactly the right way. Huge crashes have been recorded to model the impact physics and record the real sound of splintering metal. Wheels that become separated from your car don't just disappear. They'll roll away and become another obstacle to avoid. You'll be seeing other things in pile-ups you won't ever have seen before. For example, if you work hard enough to smash up your car you'll actually be able to bend the entire frame – something that even *Stuntman* couldn't do. That's right, you'll literally be able to wrap your car round an obstacle.

When all these things come together, something magical can happen. Instead of seeing just another game at work, you start subconsciously thinking of it as, on some level, real. Will your wheels stay on long enough to get you to the safe house? Is it better to smash that hanging door off or leave it swinging? Can you take that corner without ending up with all four wheels in the air? Realistic questions you'll have to answer constantly in *Driv3r*. Unlike *Stuntman*, you won't be given a brand new car after thirty seconds of careless driving. You'll need to haul the sorry remains of your vehicle around until you can spot a new one to steal.

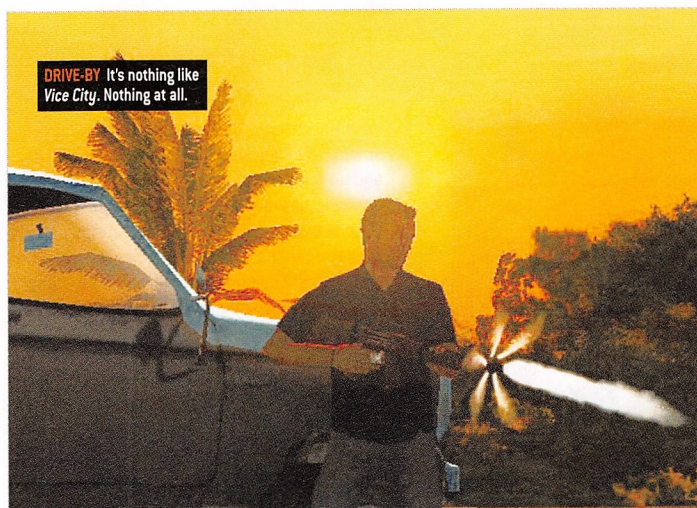
DON'T FORGET YOUR TOOTHBRUSH

Driv3r's undercover hero, Tanner, gets to try his car-thieving abilities in three progressively larger and crazier cities. Starting in Miami, he'll move on to Nice in the south of France and then Istanbul in Turkey. Each of the three cities boasts a unique character and individual layout. There's plenty of individual styling from city to city in the game too. It's hard to imagine three more differing cities. Miami, we're familiar with from *Vice City*. Or at least we think we are. What we actually got in that most admirable of titles is a cartoon-like, scaled-down and half-cocked version of Miami. But Miami in *Driv3r* is the real deal. There may not be quite as much scurrilous life in the city itself, but as you can see from our exclusive shots it's more real than most movie sets, and not far removed from the real thing. The city of Nice is, well, nice. No, it really is. A city basically built on the idea that heavy drinking and gambling is easier on the constitution if it's done by the sea, this Old World pleasure palace comes fully equipped with narrow lanes for breathless Citroën chases and coastal hills for bumpy night rides. Istanbul is some kind of insane mix of Third World slums, ever-present menace and crumbling Ottoman splendour. Until you've seen the Blue Mosque in the moonlight, you won't realise just how beautiful it really is.

That's not to say that the cities in the game will exactly mimic their real life locales. Certain aspects have been re-modelled to make them more interesting. For example, corners haven't just been cut, but completely pulled apart and redesigned for maximum stunt potential. It's all about enhancing the thrill of the chase. Unless you're a millionaire gambler with a very powerful pair of goggles you won't notice that the drive from Nice to St Tropez is a lot shorter and prettier, but it has happened. Similar nips and tucks have been performed all over the place, but we really

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

"AN ACTION-PACKED DRIVING ADVENTURE GAME THAT STAYS TRUE TO ITS ROOTS, INCORPORATING THE CINEMATIC GAMEPLAY AND GRITTY STREET CRIME OF ITS PREDECESSORS WITH GROUND-BREAKING GRAPHICS."



DRIVE-BY It's nothing like Vice City. Nothing at all.



NIGHT FALLS Dusk shows off the gorgeous lighting.

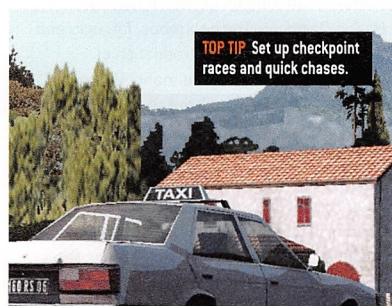


PILE-ON Of course, you can be too reckless and suffer for it.

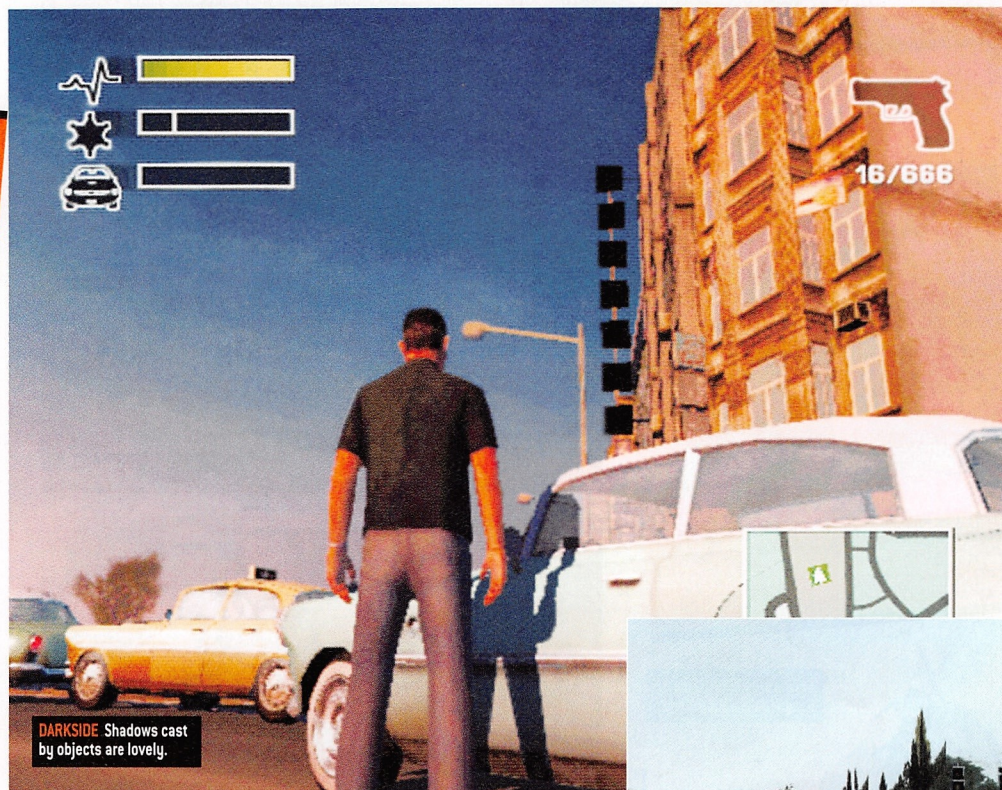
“HAUL THE SORRY REMAINS OF YOUR VEHICLE AROUND UNTIL YOU CAN SPOT A NEW ONE TO STEAL.”



BUMPER CAR Get rid of that bumper or it'll slow you down.



TOP TIP Set up checkpoint races and quick chases.



DARKSIDE Shadows cast by objects are lovely.



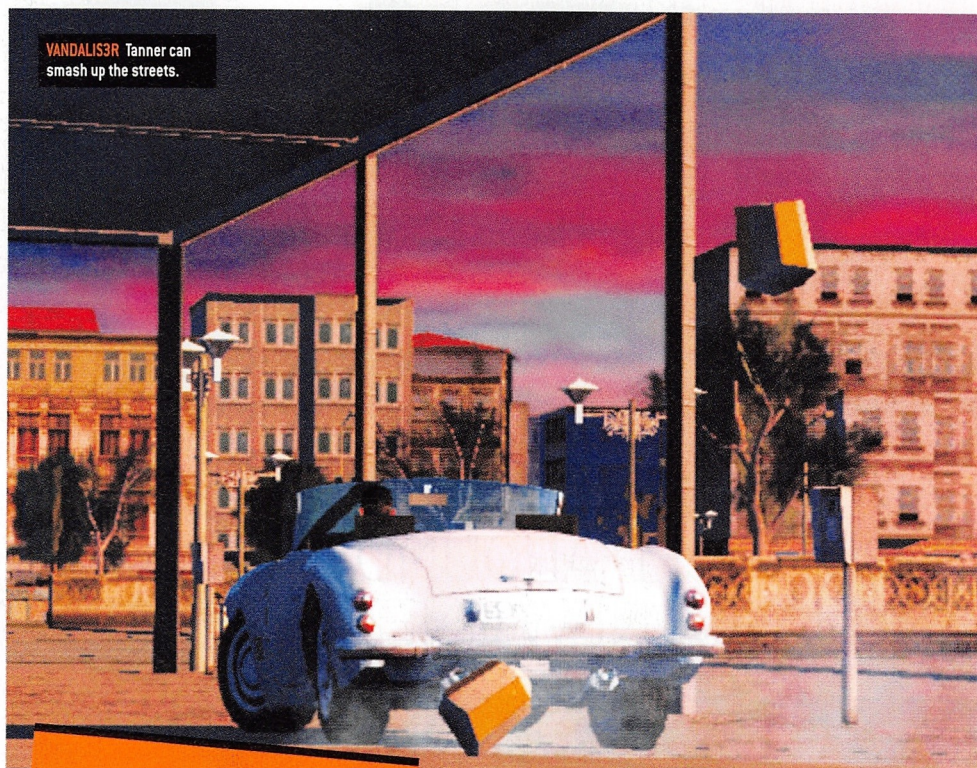
GLAMOUR PUSS No, sorry, it's a very ugly van. But it's also big enough to barge through traffic.



BUSY BODY Not as bustling as GTA's cities, but more detailed.



DRIVE THRU Stealing cars obviously makes Tanner very hungry.



VANDALIS3R Tanner can smash up the streets.

#03 THINGS TO DO IN DRIV3R DESTROY THE SCENERY



Just about everything in *Driv3r* is destructible. Make sure the programmers didn't waste their time by destroying it all to show your appreciation. All we need now are a couple of blokes hauling a sheet of glass across the road...



SUNSET STRIP Miami has a permanent orange sky.



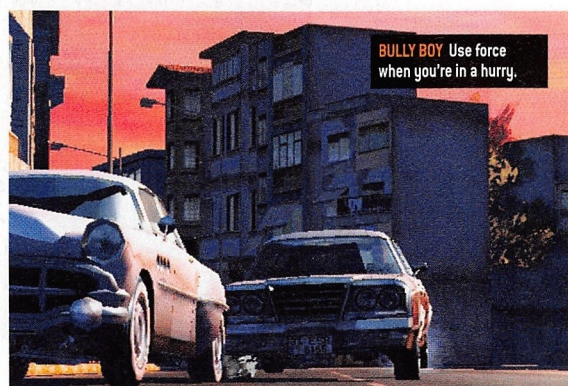
KEEP ON TRUCKIN' Free roam in Take a Ride mode.



FIRST PERSON The disorientating view from inside a motor.



JAM The streets of Miami are full of cars to smash.



BULLY BOY Use force when you're in a hurry.

don't mind. Both *The Getaway* and *True Crime: Streets of LA* decided to map their cities whole, and on both occasions it didn't work. *The Getaway* has managed to drain the life out of London by removing all the interesting backstreets and half of the traffic. *True Crime's* version of LA is much more like the real thing though, being composed of a) characterless suburbs stretching into the horizon, and b) characterless highways stretching into the horizon. Nobody wants to spend a quarter of an hour driving down roads almost as exciting as the real ones outside their window, only to fail a mission and have to do it all again. All in all there will be over 150 miles of roads in *Driv3r*. None of them, not even the really straight ones with adverts for life insurance along them, will be boring.

To date, though, our most pressing question still awaits an answer: will we be able to knock down trees? It's the dilemma that has plagued all driving game developers for years. In real life, we all know you can't just play skittles with the nearest oak, or James Dean would still be looking moody – instead of dead – today. But in games, trees are a sordid diversion from the action and deserve to be mown down. The best games do it. Let's hope that *Driv3r* sacrifices this aspect of realism and lets you cut down conifers as if Treebeard killed your mum.

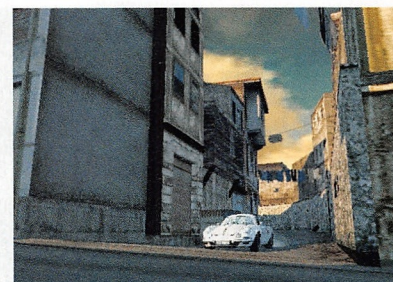
QUITE THE PRETTY ONE

What's probably going to take you by surprise at first in *Driv3r* is the look of the thing. At this stage in PS2's life cycle, you can't expect to be wowed by huge leaps in looks. But there's no denying that *Driv3r* is going for the graphical jugular by making everything look real. No cartoon pedestrians, no wacky in-jokes, no bright pastel colours or cardboard vehicles. It's all meant to look like something straight out of a Hollywood blockbuster. With tens of thousands of buildings in the three huge cities, it's as photorealistic as PS2 is ever going to get. Shadows change depending on the time of day, the sun glints off passing cars and everything conspires to set the stage for some of the most amazing chases you'll have ever seen in either a game or a film. Of course, like all *Driver* games there won't be any licensed cars in the finished version. But rest assured that you'll know which ones they represent, even if they don't have the right badges on. Muscle cars, superminis, pickups, station wagons, limousines, boy racers – they're all here and they're all eminently smashable. There are even some motorboats to captain, which goes some way to explaining why all three locations are based on the coast.

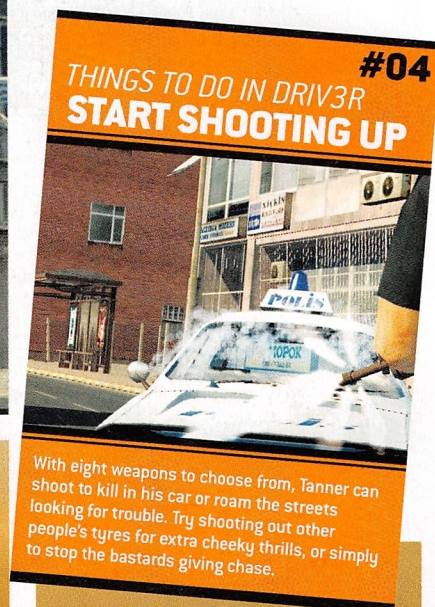
And, of course, that's not to mention the new rising stars on show. At the slim end of the wedge are a batch of fresh new two-wheeled monsters, represented not only by several Japanese-looking models but also by some throatier metal beasts in the manner of Harley Davidson. The enormous, fat, ugly end of the wedge sees the introduction of juggernauts the size of Tasmania for you to pilot. In one scene you'll get to haul one of these monsters around in a tense drug-trafficking scramble, with police cars vainly attempting to mash you up as you struggle to keep control of their eighteen-wheels. If that sounds like something out of a movie, that's because, like everything else in *Driv3r*, it's been expressly designed to.



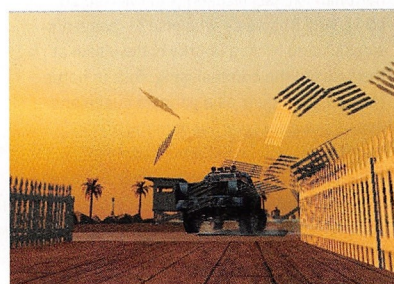
CHASE ME It's not called Driv3r for nothing.



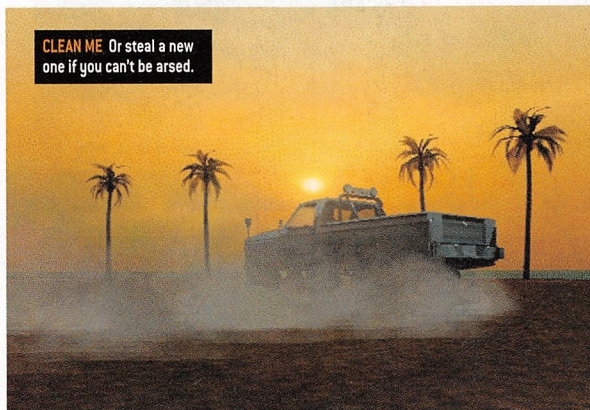
DIRTY BOY Even the filth and grime is wonderfully presented.



BLAZE OF GLORY Drive into the sunset in a classic hero shot.



PICKET LINE Flimsy fences present no problem for this beast.

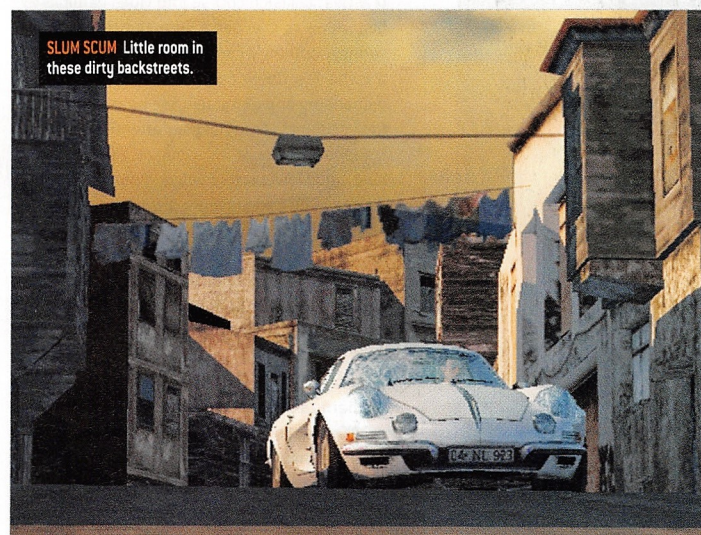


CLEAN ME Or steal a new one if you can't be arsed.

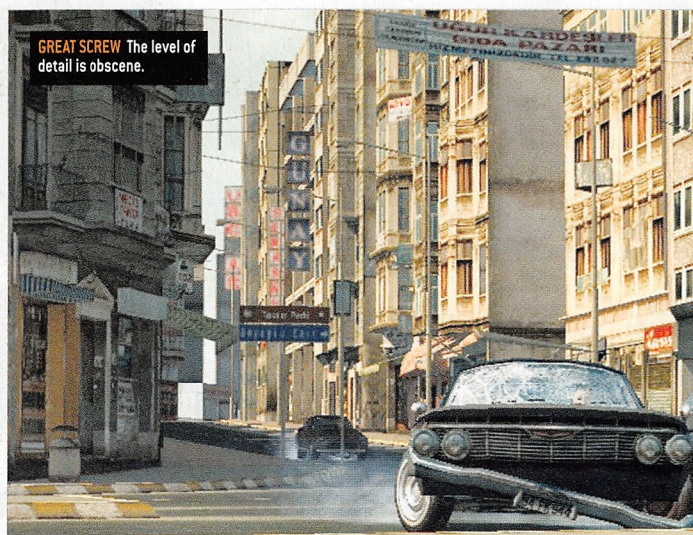


REPLAY VALUE So good we couldn't resist a different angle.

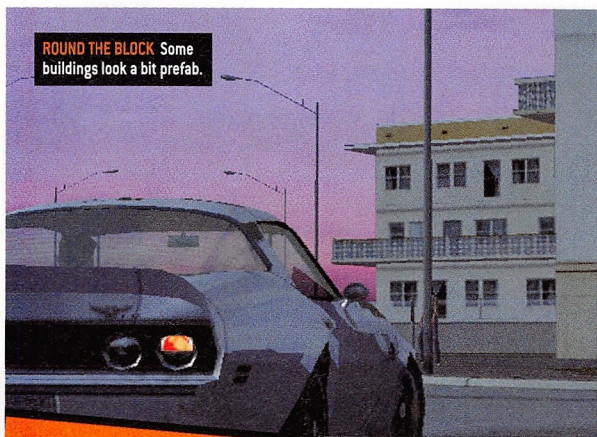
“THE STAGE IS SET FOR THE BIGGEST, BRASHEST COLLISION COURSE INTO VIDEOGAME HISTORY.”



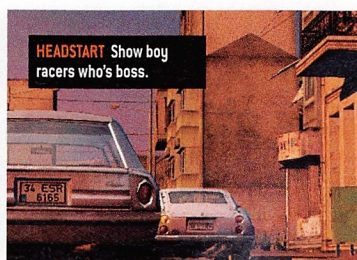
SLUM SCUM Little room in these dirty backstreets.



GREAT SCREW The level of detail is obscene.



ROUND THE BLOCK Some buildings look a bit prefab.



HEADSTART Show boy racers who's boss.



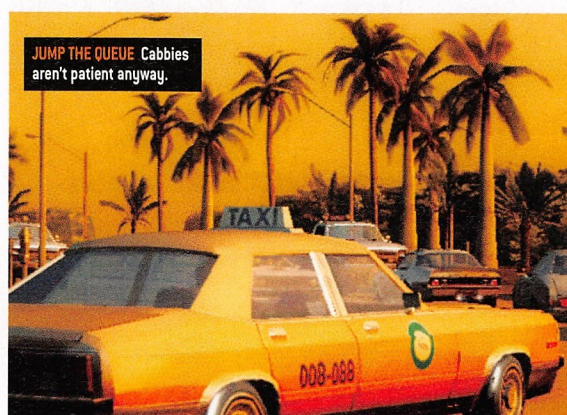
TAKE A RIGHT The radar blob is your next spot.

THINGS TO DO IN DRIV3R ADMIRE THE VIEW

#05



"Photo-realistic" is the grandstanding buzzword Reflections wants us to use about Driv3r. For once we can see why. Because this is surely as good as we can expect a PlayStation2 game to look. Without some kind of witchcraft, anyway.



JUMP THE QUEUE Cabbies aren't patient anyway.



FLYWOOD They really like those airborne fences.



CHANGING LANES Which side should you be on?



SOFT TOP Why bother with a roof in Miami?



HEAD WOUND Does this thing come with airbags?

WHAT'S THE 411?

There's even a story, lurking in there somewhere. Our man Tanner is called back into active service to investigate a multinational car-rustling operation. Tobias Jones is the name of his trusty partner, and carjacking's the name of his game. These situations being what they are, we give Tobias a fifty-fifty chance of making it out of the game alive. It's all looking slick and stylish, of course, but we have to admit we weren't exactly taking detailed notes on the plot. For one thing, it's hard to write when you're breathing down a developer's neck and whispering, "Show us the game. Show us the game. Show us the game." Whatever pretext Tanner has for causing chaos is fine with us. If he decided to steal fast cars because the Devil told him to when he was listening to Def Leppard backwards, we'd still be fine with it. That's the benefit of not really existing, you see. You get to do whatever you like.

We did notice that the voice work shows as much attention to detail as anything else in *Driv3r*. Proving that Reflections didn't spend all their profits from the first two games on Hennessy and big-ass women, they've invested in some A-List actors to talk the talk. Tanner himself is played by Reservoir Dogs' hardman Michael Madsen (interviewed on p94). Ving Rhames — who else? — plays his sidekick and Mickey Rourke is the villain at the heart of the criminal gang. Toss in hottie Michelle Rodriguez as a gangsta queen and you've got a cast worthy of many a blockbuster Hollywood production.

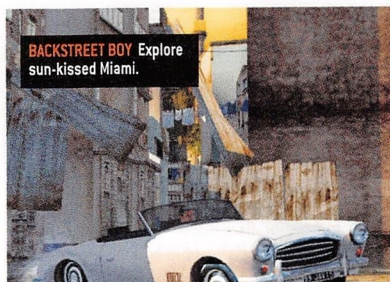
All in all, *Driv3r* has every opportunity to be fantastic. No surprise then that it includes a comprehensive set of 'showing off' options. Or replays, as some people like to call them. The editing suite is lavish, allowing you to place cameras wherever you want, and to add filters and effects to the finished piece in order to increase the feeling that you're starring in your very own Steve McQueen movie. It means that when it comes to crafting your ultimate onscreen moment, you've got all the tools you need. So once you've played the game to its fullest, and you've been an integral part of the world's most amazing chases, why not sit back and watch it all over again. Someone tell Steven Spielberg he's out of a job — we're making our own movies now.

So, you've got cars by the bucketload, guns by the carload and cinematic options by the metric ton. The stage is set for the biggest, brashest collision course into video game history we've ever seen. Sure, things could go wrong — nothing's certain until the game's on the shelves. *Driv3r* could still be too linear, too demanding and ultimately, we hate to say it, too vacuous to fully hold our attention. But somehow we doubt it. As long as gameplay is king, good looks are queen and story, accessibility and style are fawning courtiers around their throne, nothing can go wrong. And if the worst comes to the worst, at least there are plenty of spectacular views to drool over. Before we're gunned to death by hoodlums and cops, that is.

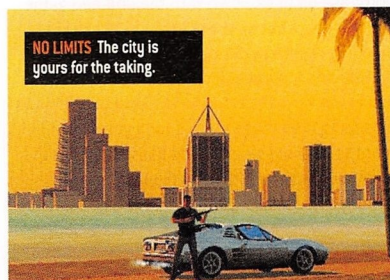
FIRST OPINIONS

It's hard to see how *Driv3r* could be any more exciting. Let's just hope it all comes together properly and forms the uber-action game we think it could. We'll be the first with the definitive review, so keep it PSW.

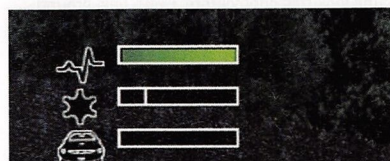
/ JOFF BROWN



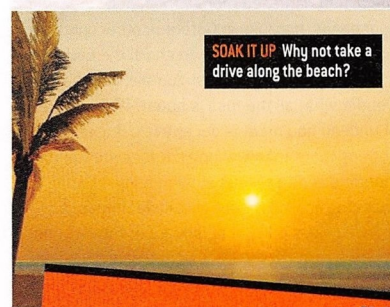
BACKSTREET BOY Explore sun-kissed Miami.



NO LIMITS The city is yours for the taking.



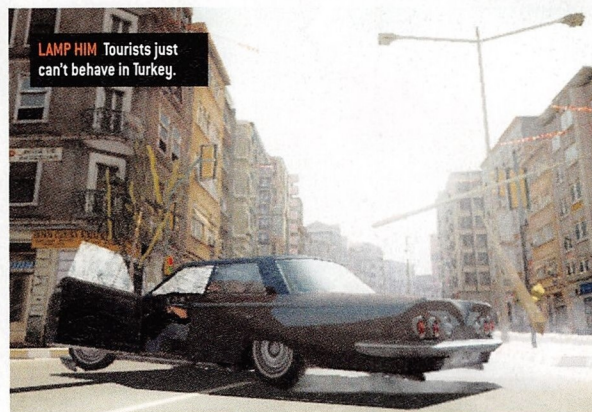
FLIPSIDE Use the space to make a cheeky U-turn.



SOAK IT UP Why not take a drive along the beach?



TRADE-IN Looks like you need to 'borrow' another.



LAMP HIM Tourists just can't behave in Turkey.



DAMAGE CONTROL Monitor the state of your vehicle.

#06
THINGS TO DO IN DRIV3R
TAKE A WALK

With each city bigger than the last, why not proceed on foot and investigate inside some buildings too? On-foot traipsing will take up around a third of the game's action, so put your hiking boots on and get exploring.



> I NEED A FACIAL

Zombies. Gotta love 'em. They only want a cuddle you know. And an ear or two to chew.

“COLD, STRINGY LIVING CORPSES WITH RAZOR-SHARP MOLARS.”

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

RESIDENT EVIL'S BACK, AND IT'S PUTTING YOU AND THREE FRIENDS IN THE SCARIEST MOVIE EVER. READ ON TO FIND OUT WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT.

> GENRE	SURVIVAL HORROR
> DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
> PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
> OUT	MID-LATE 2004
> ONLINE	MAYBE

SO. THE GAME THAT'S BROKEN THE RESIDENT

Evil mould is finally out in Japan. As you read this, literally thousands of Japanese people are sitting in front of their PS2s, linked up together to play as survivors of a zombie apocalypse. Lest you explode in sheer frustration, we thought you'd like us to sit down with the finished game and tell you what all those lucky buggers are enjoying right now. Sit back, pour yourself a stiff brandy and luxuriate in our hands-on test of the Japanese version of the game. Because we won't be seeing it on these shores for a good few months yet, and when we do it's still not clear whether it'll be a fully hooked up version or a slimmed down solo game only.

ZOMBIE WITH A TWIST

Quite simply, you've never seen a *Resident Evil* game look this good before. Every background looks hand-drawn or even photographic in its perfection, until the perspective changes and you realise that PS2 is drawing it all itself in 3D. The denizens of Raccoon City move in and out of shadows, pull realistic expressions and bleed profusely when hit. Much of the story is still told in the form of amazing cut-scenes, starting with just what happened the first night that the evil Umbrella corporation unleashed the T-virus on the unsuspecting town. But the rest is composed of stunning graphics that'll keep you exploring whether you're being pursued by zombies or not.

Still, those weaned on the darker, more sinister *Silent Hill* series may begin to wonder what all the fuss is about at first. There's no walls pulsing with blood, no hallucinations, no deep and uncomfortable sense that it's the world that's wrong, not just a few zombies. But soon the old feelings seep back. The paranoia of dead bodies. The fear of darkened rooms. The flinch whenever a door opens, because in *Outbreak* other characters can enter rooms you're in. In short, the horror.

When you see your first zombie, you may well wonder what all the fuss is about. The first breed of undead you meet is deceptively docile. They're nothing more than walking corpses, frequently motionless and always slow-moving – hardly a shocking enemy for our gore-laden times. And then slowly, slowly, they advance. Another one appears through the door as you shoot the last. As you deal with the newcomers, one of the corpses on the floor bites your leg. Suddenly, your own T-cell count is rising. As you try and take some medicine from your pack via the menu screen, a zombie pounces on you, because the action doesn't stop when you select items. You're on the floor, covered in cold, stringy living corpses with razor-sharp molars and vice-like talons. You need some help, but fortunately for you, there are other uninfected souls around...

That's right. The biggest change from previous *Resident Evil* games is that you're no longer alone in the dark. Online or off, you're accompanied by three other characters – normal everyday people like you who are trying to get the merry heck out of Raccoon City. It's up to you how you treat them, but if you're clever you'll enlist their help and swap items with them, do them favours and fight with them against the endless encroaching menace of the terrifying zombies. Generally, if you're attacked they'll help out if they can, shooting or hitting zombies attacking you. But you'd better be prepared to do the same for them, because if you don't they'll surely die. >



RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK FACT!

> IN THE BEGINNING

The game's set near the beginning of the *Resi* saga, when Raccoon City is first overrun with the evil undead.

> MOVABLE TYPE

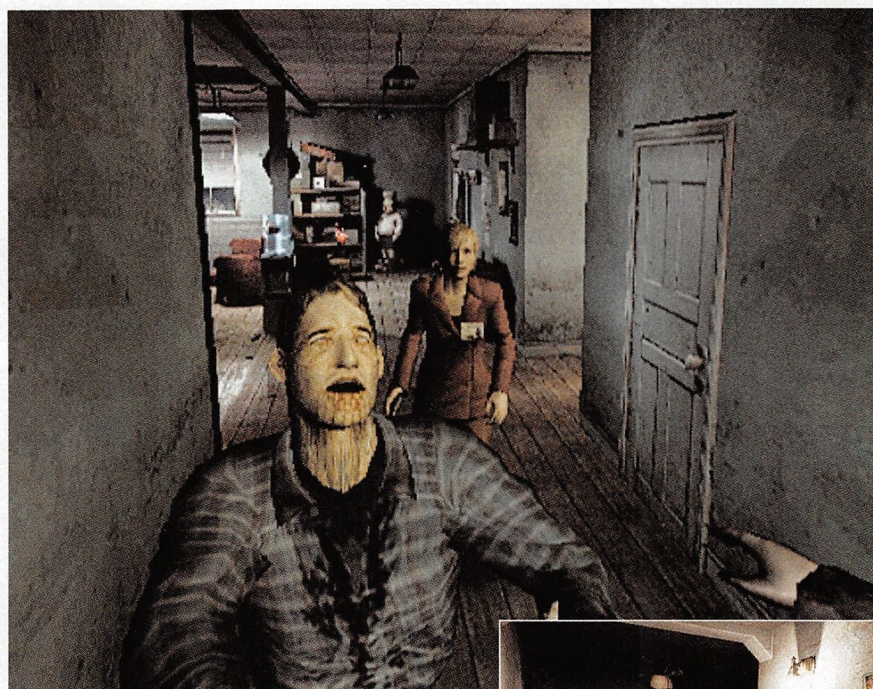
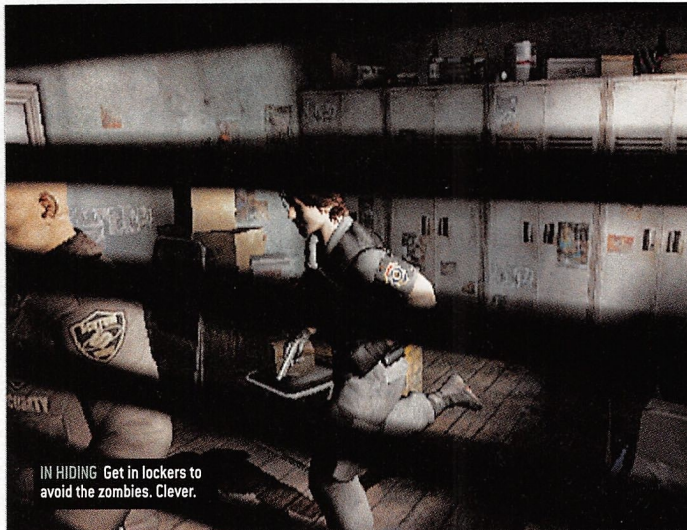
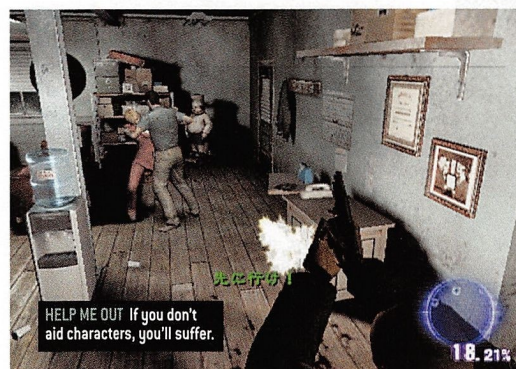
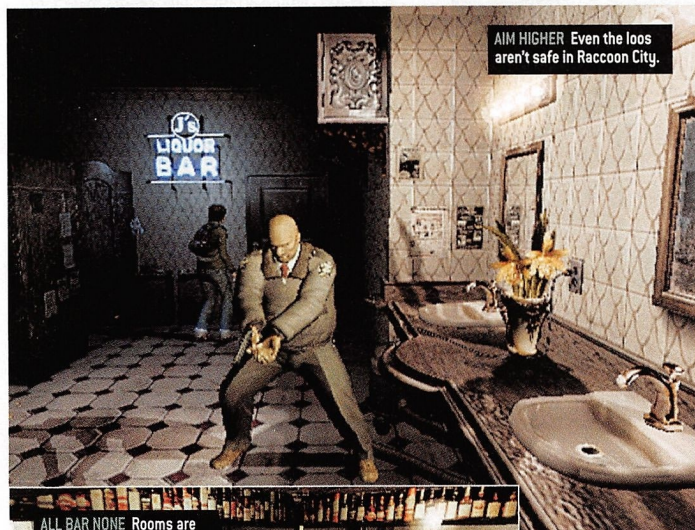
Just like in all the other *Resi* games, you'll be able to save at certain points. Those points are naturally typewriters.

> SWIVEL ON THIS

The old 'turn on the spot' style of control has been replaced with a modern and much easier interface.

> GIVING YOU EXTRA

If you complete the game with high enough scores, you'll unlock new playable characters and costumes.

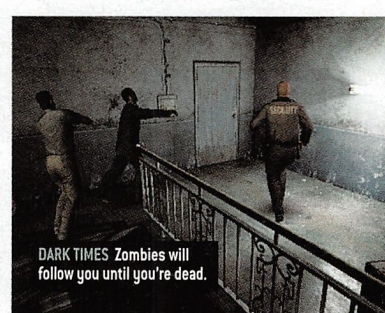
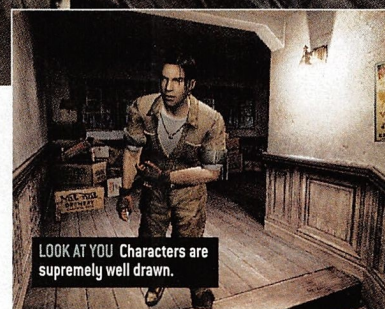


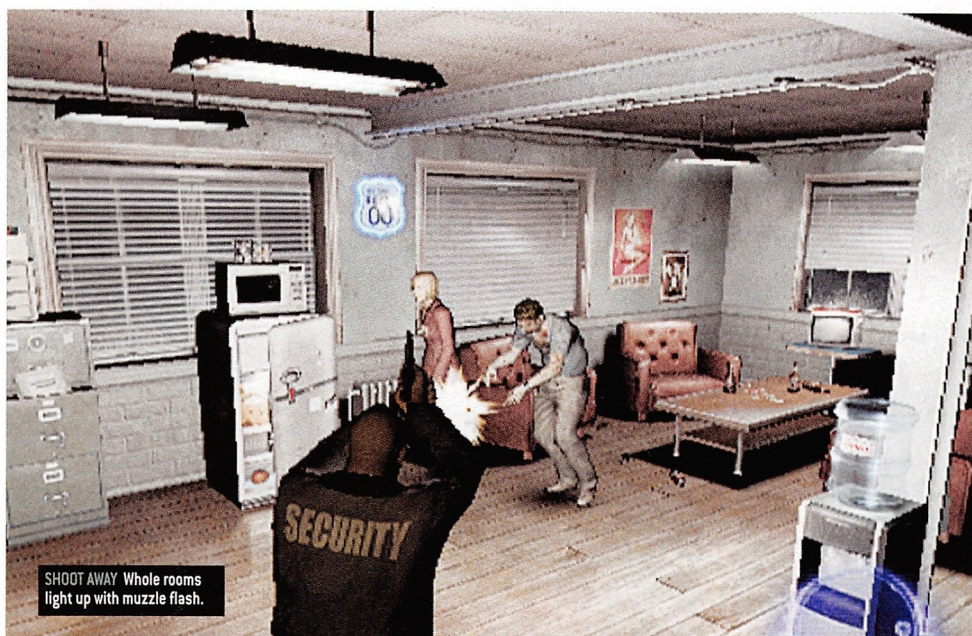
FREEDOM OF SPEECH

LOOK WHO'S TALKING — IT'S YOU IN THE GAME!

You'll never shut up again with *Outbreak's* speech ability. Push the right-hand analogue stick in any direction to call out when there's other characters around. Left shouts for help, Up tells everyone to get the hell out, Right thanks

characters for helping and Down yells out a command to follow. Characters can choose to ignore or insult you, depending on how nice you've been to them. The one thing you can't do is plug in a USB mike to *actually* talk online.

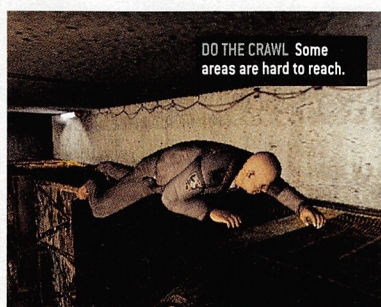




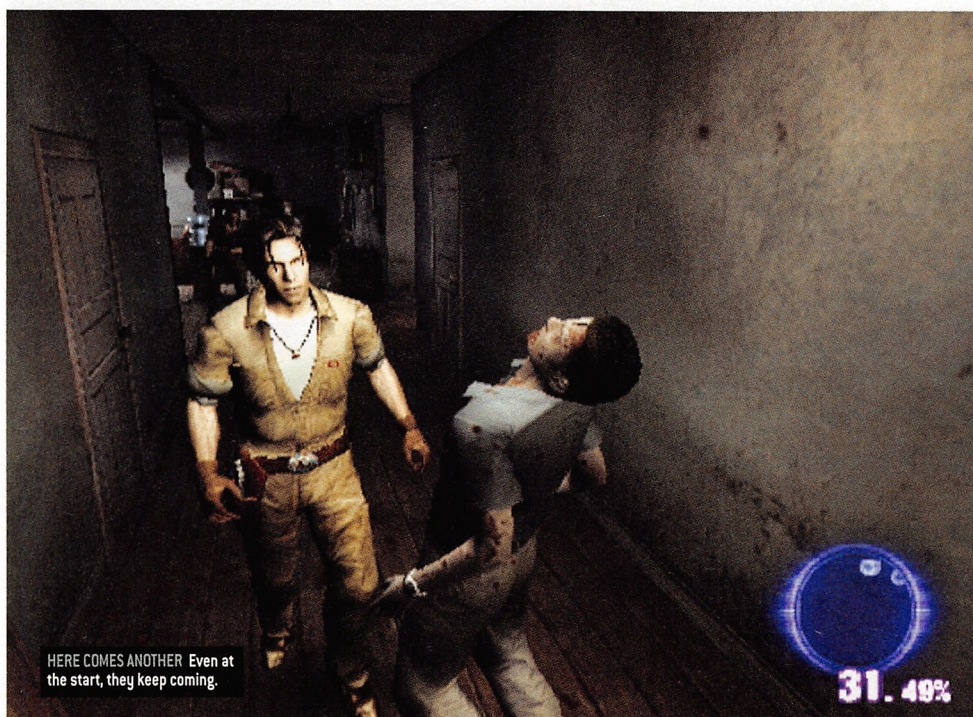
SHOOT AWAY Whole rooms light up with muzzle flash.



TEAM RACCOON Stay together for safety's sake, like in films.



DO THE CRAWL Some areas are hard to reach.



HERE COMES ANOTHER Even at the start, they keep coming.

And without friends around, escaping is going to prove well nigh impossible.

LET'S STAY TOGETHER

It's not just you who'll be shouting. In a tight spot you'll hear the cries of your fellow players or computer people around you. "Help!" "Where do we go now?" "I have an idea..." "I won't make it..." At first it's disorientating, then it's slightly unnerving, all these cries in the dark that seem only loosely connected to actual speech. But rudimentary as they are, they're your only means of connecting with the other characters. They allow you to swap items, issue commands and call for assistance, all of which prove to be vital to your escape.

As if keeping other characters sweet wasn't enough, you have to keep a beady eye on your virus meter. Get bitten, and it will rise a little. Get attacked by the undead a whole lot, and suddenly your meter is permanently, stealthily on the rise. The only thing that will stop it is the T-virus antidote, and it's hard to find. By the time you find some, you may well be inching yourself agonisingly across the floor. And if your virus count rises to 100%, in the online game you become one of the zombies yourself. Best of all, you get to take control of your newly undead form, striking out and biting the terrified other members of your group who were once your friends and saviours. Call to other characters and they'll set you on your feet, or even carry you around to safety. It's a first for games in general and it seems to work even when the characters aren't played by real people.

ROTTEN DEAL

And now a word to the wise: *Outbreak* was designed to be played with the PlayStation2 hard disk drive, out in Japan but looking unlikely to pop up on these shores before the advent of *Final Fantasy XI*, if ever. Without the hard disk drive, *Outbreak*'s still playable but every time you enter a new room, you have to wait a few ponderous seconds as the game loads everything from the disk. It breaks up the action, but anyone who's played a *Resident Evil* game before will be very familiar with it. It's still a shame, though.

Worst of all, Capcom still hasn't worked out whether the Australian version will be online or not. If Capcom decides to release the game without any online features at all, we can expect to see it in a few months' time. But if the company bites the bullet and decides to release some kind of online content in the Aussie version of the game, don't expect to be playing *Outbreak* over here before spring. Now that we've played it properly, we can kind of see the case for a single-player version. Maybe we need two releases, an early one so everyone can get their fix of this intense survival horror title and a later one for those who want to play online. We reckon this is the most likely option.

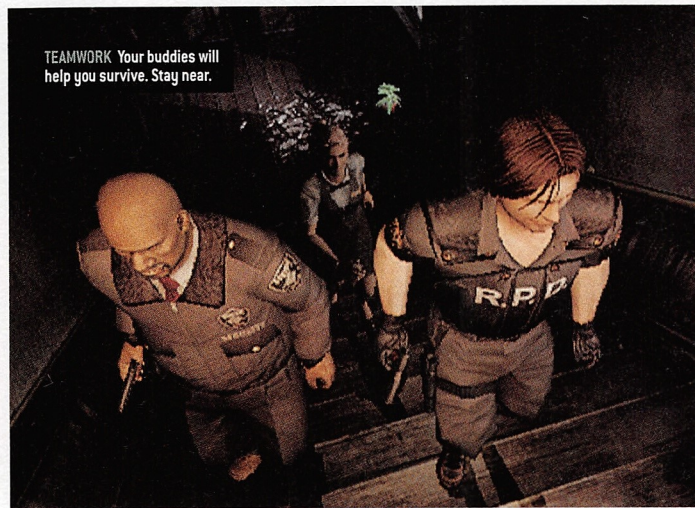
FIRST OPINIONS

We finally think we've worked out what it is they've been getting at, all these months. *Outbreak* stakes its claim on the idea that the main advance in gameplay for the *Resident Evil* series is character interaction. Online or off, you're not alone and it's this factor that truly makes *Outbreak* stand out from the crowd. We had a lot of fun exploring the zombie-infested Raccoon City, and we're prepared to wait for Capcom to take the extra time to get it online over here. Let's just hope the survival horror specialist is listening to us.

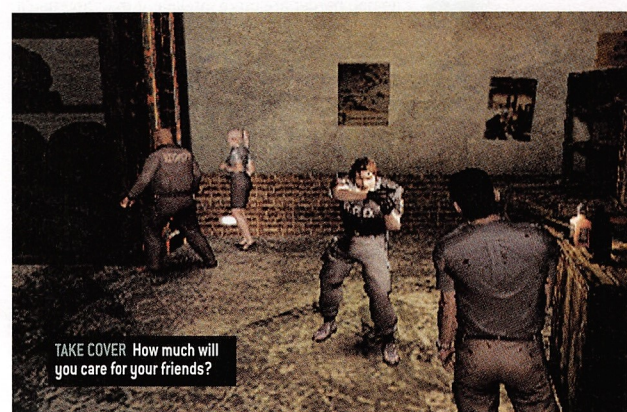
/ JOFF BROWN

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

"RETAINS THE SIGNATURE *RESIDENT EVIL* STORYTELLING, VISUALS, AND BONE-CHILLING AUDIO THAT CAPCOM'S SURVIVAL HORROR FANS DEMAND."



“YOU GET TO STRIKE OUT AT YOUR FRIENDS AND SAVIOURS.”



EIGHT OF THE BEST

EVERY CHARACTER HAS SKILLS YOU'LL NEED TO SURVIVE THE HORROR. HERE'S THE RUNDOWN OF THEIR INDIVIDUAL ABILITIES AND A LITTLE ABOUT WHAT MAKES THEM TICK.



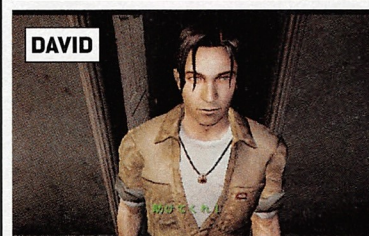
A scrawny runt of a subway ticket officer.
SKILLS: He can lie down and play dead, making monsters think he's a corpse.



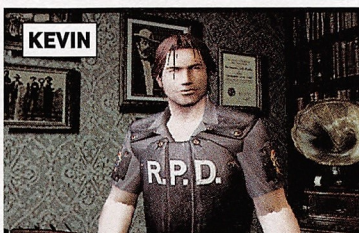
Feisty reporter in the thick of the action.
SKILLS: A dab hand with a pistol, Alyssa can pick locks to get to unreachable areas.



Nerdy doc with enormous brains.
SKILLS: Can make medicines which can heal wounds and stop the virus spreading.



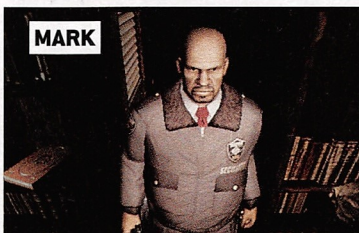
Soft-spoken plumber with a violent side.
SKILLS: Dave can chuck spanners and weld objects together to make new ones.



Cocky Tom Cruise-a-like police hero.
SKILLS: Can kick off monsters if he has to, but he's handy with his Colt handgun too.



Barmaid who's always ready to serve.
SKILLS: Able to dodge monsters better than most, and top at healing other characters.



Slow-moving veteran security guard.
SKILLS: He's great with clubbing weapons, and can take more damage than most.



Introverted loner, the team's dark horse.
SKILLS: A fast mover, and can store more items thanks to her trendy backpack.



>THE PERFECT GHOST

Read this preview.
Please. We spent ages
on it. Come on. For us.
You will? Ah thanks.

“GET READY FOR A
THROATY, BEEF-SMELLING
ACTION BELCH.”

STARCRAFT: GHOST

A GORGEOUS STEALTH ACTION TITLE WITH MORE IDEAS THAN
IT KNOWS WHAT TO DO WITH. QUICK, SOMEONE GET THE CAMERA.

> GENRE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> DEVELOPER	BLIZZARD ENT/NIHILISTIC SOFTWARE
> PUBLISHER	VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
> ETA	MID 2004
> ONLINE	NO

WHAT, YOU MAY ASK, IS THE LINK BETWEEN

StarCraft: Ghost and the original *StarCraft*, a sperm-murdering strategy title designed under strict laboratory conditions to be played exclusively by the exceptionally dull? Thankfully, there isn't one. Well, there is – the vehicles, the environments and the characters have all been plundered – but the parent title's suffocating emphasis on building bases and harvesting resources has been wrapped into an egg-stained blanket and fired from a cannon into space.

In its place comes a beef-smelling action belch, a fast-paced shooter powered by a strong story and a surprising and unlikely thrust of innovation. Essentially, *Ghost* is a tenuous brand extension. A Mitsubishi chocolate bar. A Jack Daniel's saxophone. A McDonald's hamburger. *StarCraft* enthusiasts will be disheartened to hear this. Who knows, it could even be the news that tips the scales of their gloomy existence over to 'painful suicide' once and for all. The rest of us won't give a rocket-propelled fig. We'll just look forward to the arrival of another top quality shooter on our flourishing console, celebrating with a sip of vanilla Coke and a packet of mildly refrigerated Kraft Vegemite Singles.

GHOST OF A CHANCE

Our hero, Nova, is female and capable of startling and exceptional things. Even by man standards. By using her heightened Psi-Powers, Nova can render herself invisible, switch to a heat-sensitive thermal view and disable all electronic devices in her immediate vicinity. Not bad for a girl.

To even things out, the guards hired to make her job harder are more intelligent than any you'll have encountered before. For example, shutting down a surveillance camera allows Nova to sneak by unnoticed, but the moment a sentry discovers that the device isn't working he'll order a full sweep of the area in a bid to discover the cause of the fault.

When Nova finds herself close enough to a guard to count the hairs on the back of his neck, she's able to execute a stealth kill. The pick so far has her wrapping her legs around the guard's neck before snapping his spinal column like a dry twig. It's not to be sniffed at, as far as fatalities go.

Praise Jesus that *Ghost* is about more than just stealth. We like being quiet, don't get us wrong, but sometimes we just want to cut loose. Softly, softly may well catchy monkey, but a shotgun and a Harley is just so much more rock 'n' roll. Follow us over to the vehicle showroom then for a flavour of just how noisy and chaotic *Ghost* can be. See that Siege Tank over there? The one with the cannon the size of Gibraltar? It's yours. Take it, and don't bring it back until your kill tally resembles a foreign telephone number.

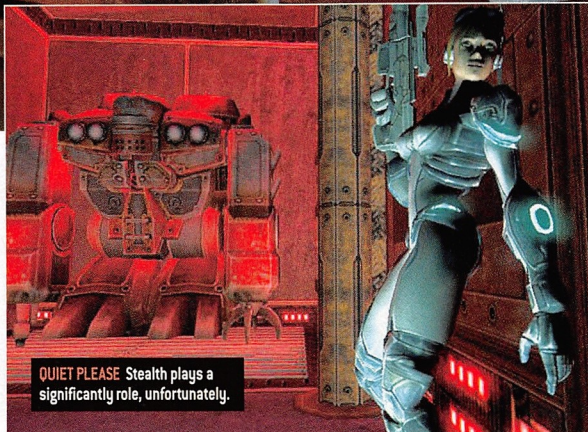
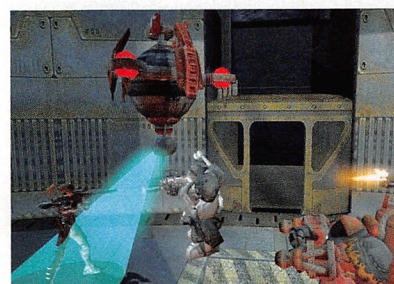
FIRST OPINIONS

We've already stuffed both hands firmly into *Ghost*'s underpants, and we don't plan to take them out until it agrees to move in with us full-time later in the year. Frankly, we expect big things from a title with the pedigree to challenge *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*.

/ **JON BROWN**



NOVA CANES She's the hardest girl in the world.



QUIET PLEASE Stealth plays a significantly role, unfortunately.



LIFE CRAFT Your suit can render you invisible. Might not be a bad idea right now.

STRIKE UP THE BRAND

HOW *GHOST* STACKS UP AGAINST THE LEADING BRAND EXTENSIONS.

CRUNCHIE NUGGETS



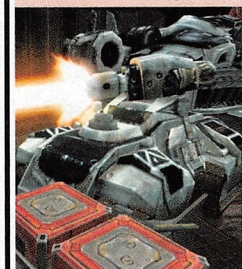
"We love the word 'nugget,'" is the first entry in a 2,000-strong list of reasons why PSW adores the Crunchie Nugget. Even though they look like rat shits. Brand extended by: nine fathoms

KIT KAT CHUNKY



The classic Kit Kat's wafers provided the perfect base for the moderate chocolate coating. ChunKy stuffed it up. Brand extended by: Around a wood-pecker's pecker.

STARCRAFT: GHOST



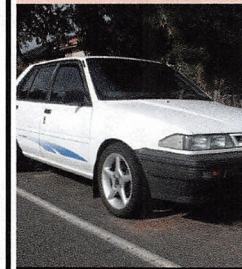
Exactly how a brand should be extended; the flabby bits have been removed, allowing a series of artificially inflated interesting bits to be inserted. Supple. Brand extended by: 1.7 miles

VANILLA COKE



We once drank one when the vending machine gave birth to a free one next to our Deep Spring Lemon and Lime. Brand extended by: No more than a hip dislocation.

NISSAN PULSAR REEBOK



Now this is more like it. The greatest automotive branding exercise in history. Cooler than bobby socks in 1989, or Brian Ferry. Brand extended by: Only 120 000 km.

STARCRAFT: GHOST FACT!



DEAD FISHERS

A stealth meter, like the one used by Sam Fisher, shows you visually how much noise you're making.

HANDY GRENADES

Nova's default Canister rifle is joined by over ten varieties of grenade. That's quite a few.

ARSE AND CRAFT

StarCraft bores will recognise members of the Terran, Zerg and Protoss races. No-one else will.

WATCH THE STARS

As soon as *StarCraft: Ghost* is tucked up in bed, Blizzard will turn its attention to *StarCraft 2*.



> GOT A HOLD ON YOU

You can tell he takes far too much pleasure in draining minds until heads explode.

“IT’S UNDERGONE A FACELIFT CHER WOULD BE PROUD OF.”

PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

BECOME MORE POWERFUL THAN DAVID BLAINE IN THIS ACTION-PACKED SHOOTER THAT LETS YOU DO MORE THAN JUST STEW IN A BOX.

> GENRE	SHOOTING
> DEVELOPER	MIDWAY
> PUBLISHER	MIDWAY
> ETA	JUNE
> ONLINE	NO

OI, URI! CALL YOURSELF A PSYCHIC? BENDING

spoons, writing books and befriending Michael Jackson is hardly the work of a miracle worker. A 12-year old boy more like. The things we’d do if we had Geller’s powers: PRs wanting our review scores changed would be set on fire, bounced around the office from wall to wall and then their minds drained until their heads explode. But each to their own.

Nick Scryer is equally brutal. He’s an American psi-operative soldier and an elite one at that, meaning he does more than tamper with cutlery and talk out of his arse. There’s a psi-enhanced terrorist movement called, um, The Movement, who want to use their mind-bending powers to do bad things. Scryer has his mind wiped so he can infiltrate their HQ without being detected, a convenient way of regaining your psi powers one at a time and another airing for that old story staple of a hero who’s lost his memory.

Until recently labouring under the pun-burdened title *ESPionage*, the game has undergone a facelift Cher would be proud of. It’s now far easier to control your psi powers, which currently total six. When you regain one, Scryer has a playable flashback to his training where you can see how that power might be used against enemies and to solve puzzles.

PICK ME UP

The power you unleash most often is telekinesis, which allows people and objects to be picked up and moved to your advantage. The creative possibilities this opens up are almost limitless. For example, in a level called Fusion Tower, part of a walkway is broken and the gap is too far to jump, while three enemies take up positions on the other side behind boxes. Dealing with the guards first, you could remove their cover and just shoot them. Alternatively, you could smash crates into them (provided they don’t see the projectiles coming and roll out of the way), stack unbreakable objects around them to effectively imprison them, lift up one enemy and toss him into the others, or pick them up one by one and drop them through the gap. Once they’re dealt with you could then place a long object across the gap to form a bridge, or actually balance on a loose object yourself and use it as a surfboard. And remarkably all these options arise from just the one power.

Another option is moving Scryer into cover and using mind control to take over an enemy, then shooting the other two at point blank range before they can return fire. This power also comes in handy for spying on the enemy’s patrol patterns, and when your host’s usefulness has run out all you need to do is commit suicide and control returns to Scryer.

TRAILBLAZER

Yet another option is the powerful pyrokinesis attack, which launches a burst of fire burning everything in its path. Direct hits are easy, but a funnier method is to first use telekinesis to set down or float a flammable object near the group of three and then take aim. And because fire in the game propagates you can always go for something more complex such as setting up a chain of burnable objects next to the flammable one, as if it were a trail of



PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY **FACT!**

> MYSTERY WOMAN

A double agent called Sarah gives you a helping hand, though she only appears in cut-scenes.

> WHAT'S IN A NAME?

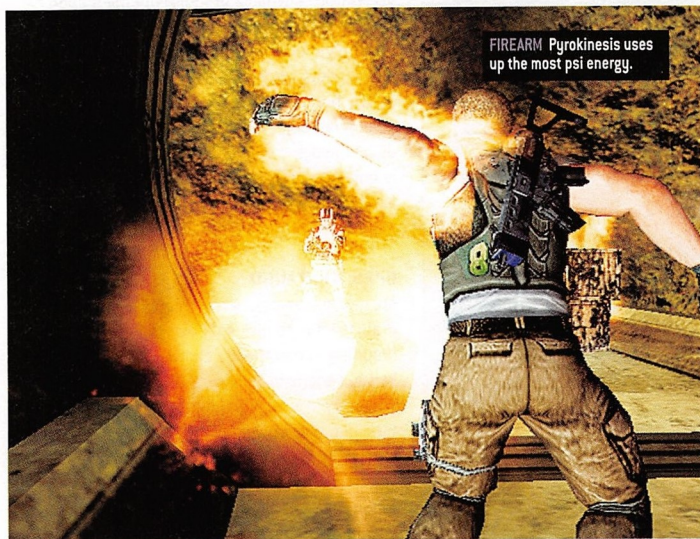
Stryker's surname was originally going to be Geller, which was obviously a bit too blatant.

> INSIDE INFORMATION

There are eight levels in the game, but only approximately a quarter of it takes place outdoors.

> PLAY HAVOC

The in-game physics for people and objects are also used in *Max Payne 2* and *StarCraft: Ghost*.



FIREARM Pyrokinesis uses up the most psi energy.



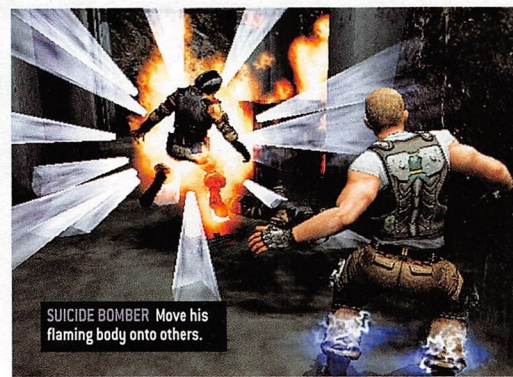
PASS IT ON If other enemies were close they'd catch fire.



DO LOOK DOWN Savouring the moment is just mean.



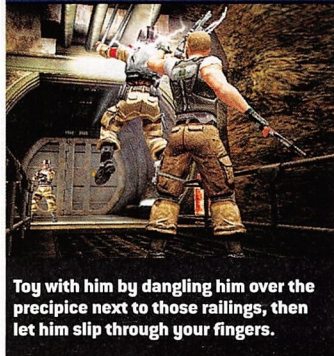
HEAD JAM It's even more gruesome than *Scanners*.



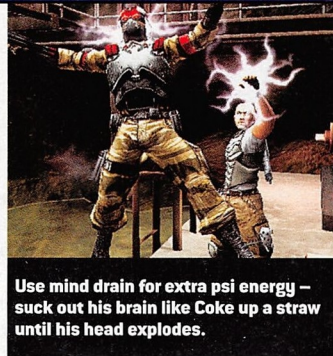
SUICIDE BOMBER Move his flaming body onto others.

MENTALLY UNSTABLE

WHAT'S THE MOST SADISTIC WAY TO DISPATCH AN ENEMY?



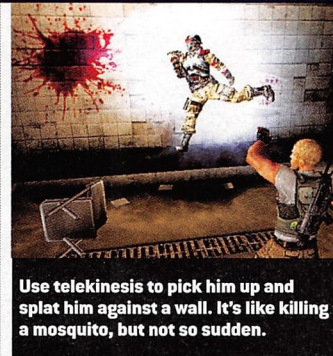
Toy with him by dangling him over the precipice next to those railings, then let him slip through your fingers.



Use mind drain for extra psi energy – suck out his brain like Coke up a straw until his head explodes.



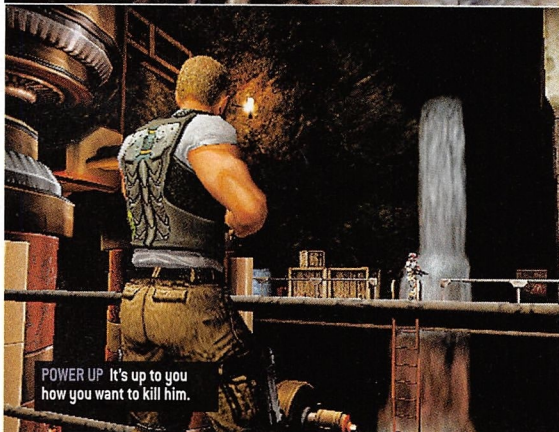
Unleash the power of pyrokinesis to toss him onto a bonfire and watch him writhe in the flames.



Use telekinesis to pick him up and splat him against a wall. It's like killing a mosquito, but not so sudden.



COME TO DADDY Create a stepping stone or surf on it.



POWER UP It's up to you how you want to kill him.



SURF'S UP You can balance on any loose object.



HAVE A BLAST Short the red beams and kill both enemies.

gunpowder leading up to a keg. Any enemies not caught in the blast can easily be lifted over the pyre and dropped.

The game is full of these kinds of open situations. Later in the level for example, a section of floor is electrified, powered by three generators – while a group of enemies open fire from the other side. Here you could shoot out the generators, burn them out using pyrokinesis, short them by dropping an enemy on the floor, ignore them and surf to the other side on an object, hover an object in front of you as a shield or... well, you should see where this is going by now. The only limits to what can be achieved are set by your imagination and how much psi energy you have.

OPEN YOUR MIND

Ah, yes, psi energy. A fourth power called mind drain is used to nick psi powers from enemies resulting in their heads exploding like that famous scene in *Scanners*. These increase Scryer's psi energy bar which dwindles every time you use a power. Dead guards only provide a small amount of energy and the power only works on unaware enemies, so stealth is required to get close enough. Well, kind of. In keeping with the game's multiple solutions to a problem, an enemy who spots you can be thrown against a wall using telekinesis and mind drained while he's dazed, or spun around in midair and drained while he's disorientated.

Stealth really only plays a cameo role and for this there's remote viewing, where Scryer goes out of his body to see through doors and watch enemy patrol patterns before physically entering the area. Moving further away from his body drains more energy, and when you're finished spying the camera stylishly reverses all the way back to Scryer.

A similar distorted perspective is used for the sixth and final power called aura view, which places you into a kind of different plane of existence. Here you can see hidden messages and clues not visible in the real world. Some opponents also reside in this plane, though the developer is being coy about their identities. Our guess is enemies who are the equal of Scryer.

You see, as the story progresses it's revealed that Scryer has a connection (apart from the obvious psionic one) to The Movement's leader and some of the six boss enemies who specialise in one of the psi powers. One such boss encounter in a train yard is against a purple-suited Afro-American called Barret. He's Scryer's former friend and is a telekinesis whiz, lobbing train cars and other huge objects at him like confetti. You can actually catch these items and redirect them back where they come from, though an attempt to seal him in with objects and then drop stuff on his head is dashed by his telekinesis blast which smashes through items.

If you haven't already read our minds we reckon *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* looks extremely promising. The gameplay still needs plenty of balancing as your abilities are far too powerful for the opposition, but we're hopeful they'll pull it all together.

FIRST OPINIONS

Provided the rest of the puzzles can match the quality of the psi powers then we should be in for something special. It's testament to the game's potential that you could play it over and over, dispatching enemies and solving the puzzles differently each time.

/ JONATHAN TODD

WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

"A FRESH, EXCITING TAKE ON THE ACTION GENRE. THE GAME STRATEGICALLY INTEGRATES PSIONIC POWERS AND WEAPONS COMBAT, OPENING UP CREATIVE NEW WAYS TO EXPERIENCE THE GAME."

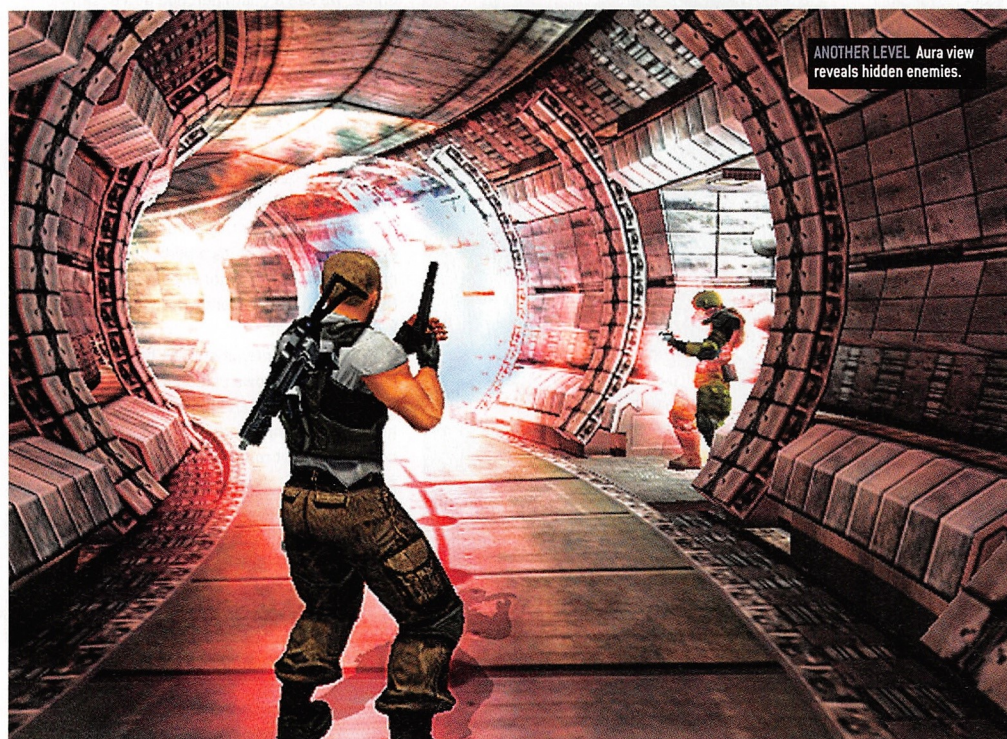


EASY DOES IT Or you could just have shot that barrel.

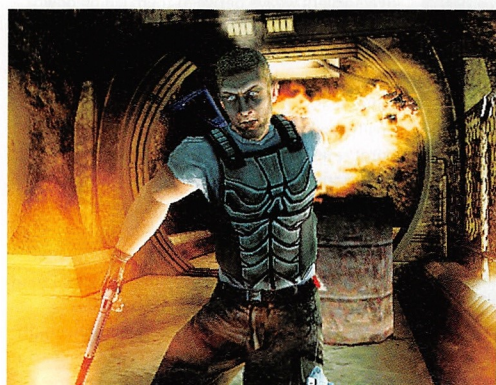


HIT AND MISS Some enemies keep firing while in midair.

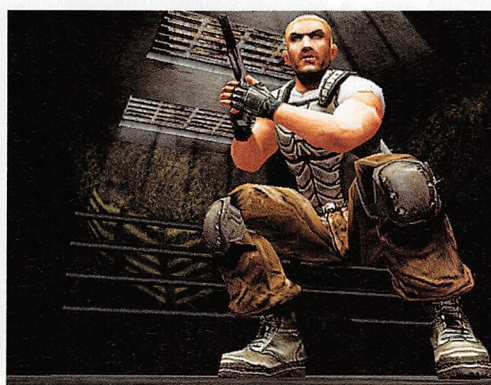
“THE ONLY LIMITS ARE SET BY YOUR IMAGINATION AND HOW MUCH PSI ENERGY YOU HAVE.”



ANOTHER LEVEL. Aura view reveals hidden enemies.



TOO HOT TO HANDLE You don't regain pyrokinesis until quite far into the game.



PAUSE FOR THOUGHT Stealth is rarely needed if you use your abilities properly.

CAST YOUR MIND BACK

PSI-OPS ISN'T QUITE AS ORIGINAL AS IT SEEMS.



// **DEUS EX**

(2002)

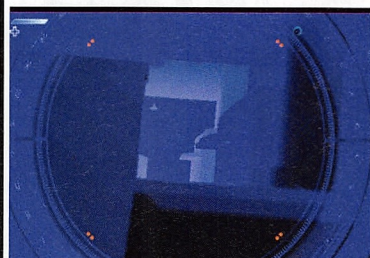
A number of skills, upgrades, weapons and items allow you to change your character and solve puzzles differently each time.



// **LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE**

(2003)

Kain and Raziel both use telekinesis to draw their enemies to them for feeding – or to impale them on nearby spikes.



// **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE – OPERATION SURMA**

(2003)

Remote viewing is a bit like Ethan Hunt's sonic imager gadget, which allows him to see through doors before making his move.



> FROST BITE

He won't look so smug once we blow his limbs off. And that snowman's gonna get it too.

"BLOW LIMBS OFF, BUT YOUR BLOODY FOOTPRINTS CAN GIVE YOU AWAY."

COLD WINTER

IF YOU WERE LEFT FOR DEAD AND DISOWNED BY YOUR COUNTRY YOU'D WANT TO SETTLE A FEW SCORES. STARTING WITH BUSTING OUT OF PRISON.

> GENRE	SHOOTING
> DEVELOPER	SWORDFISH STUDIOS
> PUBLISHER	VIVENDI
> OUT	LATE 2004
> ONLINE	TBA

ALONG WITH HALLE BERRY SURFACING FROM

water all slippery and wet, the only other good bit in *Die Another Day* is the credit sequence where Bond is tortured and rots in a hellhole for just over a year. It's brutal and unexpected and almost makes up for that stupid invisible car. MI6 evidently needs to take a look at its training methods, because *Cold Winter's* Andrew Sterling is the latest secret agent it's had to disavow. He's captured by communist Chinese soldiers while working undercover, bludgeoned with the butt of a gun several times and banged up awaiting execution. And all this is in the opening cutscene. Suffice to say there's a big fat MA 15+ sticker ready to be slapped on *Cold Winter*.

Six months later and the game begins proper set against the backdrop of the Chinese New Year. Using the celebratory fireworks as soundproof cover, a fellow agent by the name of Kim goes against orders and orchestrates a prison rescue. She fights alongside Sterling, though you have no control over her, and must also survive otherwise it's game over.

The breakout-cum-tutorial takes place over two levels and shows off the superb way enemies work alone and together. Rounding a corner we see a guard perched at a desk who promptly leaps up, kicks over the table and ducks down behind it — popping up every so often to take a pot-shot. Of course it's scripted, which means he does this same move every time he spots us, but enemies also perform these kinds of actions because it's their best chance of living and not just because they're explicitly predetermined to do so. Every object can be picked up, moved or thrown depending on its size and weight, whether it's a bed tipped over to create cover or a radiator wrenched free from its fixtures and held in front of you as an improvised bullet-proof vest.

Since *Cold Winter* is still the best part of a year away, it often throws up some erratic moments. And oddly this makes it perfect at demonstrating how enemies think for themselves when they're not obeying set routines. Further along the mazy prison, PSW is told to expect a guard stationed alone to brick it and run for help. Except he doesn't. Oops. Instead he stands his ground and inflicts a fair amount of damage on Sterling before his bravery gets the better of him. Second time around the guard realises there's no nearby cover and does a runner.

DIY DEATH TRAPS

Enemies are equally adept working as a team. In a courtyard filled with statues, a group of four or five soldiers weave between them laying down covering fire as their leader directs things from the rear. A pair even combine and lob a flashbang grenade followed by a smoke grenade, giving the entire team time to move unseen into a better position while you're blinded by the bright white burnt retina effect. Take out the leader first though and the rest could become disorganised or panic.

Like any spy worth his salt, Sterling has access to plenty of gadgets, but unlike *Splinter Cell's* Sam Fisher and *Mission: Impossible's* Ethan Hunt, he has to fashion them himself. Makes sense when you think about it. The problem with the above games is that the items you're given at the beginning of a level just happen to be the ones you need, which is not only a whopping >



COLD WINTER FACT!

> HALO NASTY

The developer cites *Halo* as a huge influence on the combat system in the way it tailored the controls to a joypad.

> SPLIT DECISION

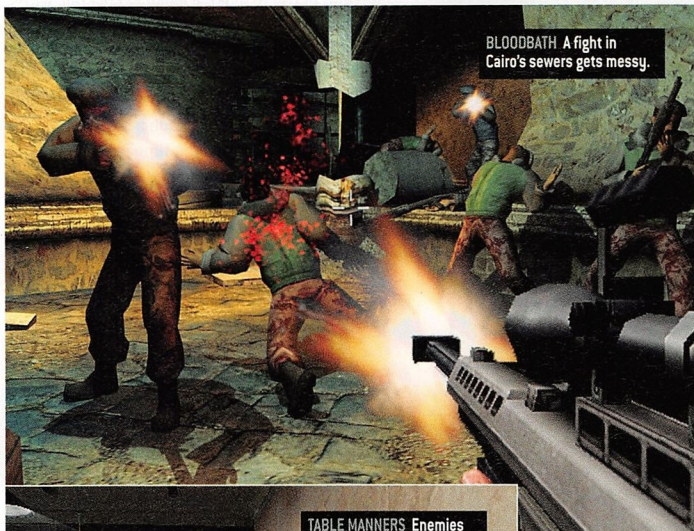
Online play isn't confirmed (which probably means it'll be included), but four-player split-screen is.

> DARK PAST

We're told that your man Sterling has a few skeletons in his closet. A secret lovechild or gay affair? Maybe...

> THE END IS IN SIGHT

The developer considered letting gamers play any level and skip to the end of the game.



BLOODBATH A fight in Cairo's sewers gets messy.



FULL-ON You might be a spy, but forget stealth.



TABLE MANNERS Enemies tip objects to hide behind.



HEADACHE Wounds produce fantastic amounts of blood.



STERLING WORK

HOW DOES *COLD WINTER*'S AGENT MEASURE UP?



> ANDREW STERLING

Cold Winter

UNBLEMISHED RECORD: Experienced pro who splatters enemies without remorse and also creates gadgets.

CAREER BLIPS: His looks and character profile perhaps make him too similar to Sam Fisher.



> ETHAN HUNT

Mission: Impossible - Operation Surma

UNBLEMISHED RECORD: A popular movie character equally skilled using fists, feet or guns.

CAREER BLIPS: A kind of watered down Sam Fisher clone who also looks nothing like Tom Cruise.

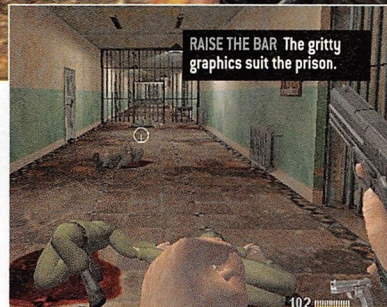


> SAM FISHER

Splinter Cell

UNBLEMISHED RECORD: The current daddy of all things stealth who boasts more moves than a performing chimp.

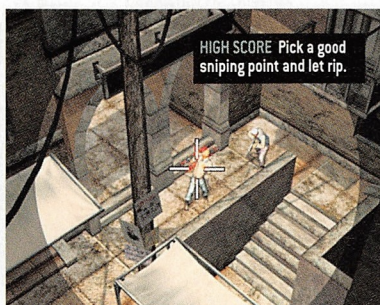
CAREER BLIPS: Always avoids a scrap and often refuses to play fair if he's spotted by enemies.



RAISE THE BAR The gritty graphics suit the prison.



RED OR DEAD Careful not to leave a trail of footprints.



WHAT THE MAKERS SAY

"COMBINES THE GRIM AND GRITTY GAMEPLAY HARDCORE GAMERS HAVE COME TO EXPECT WITH A STORYLINE REMINISCENT OF TODAY'S CONTEMPORARY SPY THRILLERS."

coincidence but also pre-empts what's going to happen. Let's face it, there's only one reason why you should be equipped with a laser cutter. By selecting an item from Sterling's inventory all other items that can be used with it are highlighted. Combinations include a bottle, some rags and petrol to make a Molotov cocktail; wires, a calculator and circuit boards to create a digital door hacking device; wires and pliers to form a lock pick; and poison applied to a business card which you hand to a target. Imagine how cool it would be if you could barricade a door with chairs and tables and then use the time it takes for enemies to break through to build an explosive, which is triggered when they enter. *Cold Winter* is that game.

ONE LAST HIT

And it's full of these great touches. Guards can be pick-pocketed or used as human shields. You can snipe a grenade attached to an enemy's body to take out three or four troops at once. Flies swarm around bodies and moths are attracted to light. Limbs can be blown off and enemies gibbed. A trail of bloody footprints might give away your position.

But the most controversial aspect isn't the gore. In any case, *Cold Winter* sensibly doesn't want to or try to resemble the controversy-seeking *Manhunt*. No, what could be deemed controversial are the constant nods and winks to the casual gamer, starting with a shortened game length. The story is split into three threads, each lasting around six hours, where you only see how they're related by playing through all three. The reason for this "shorter, more intense experience", as the developer puts it, is that apparently not many of you actually reach the end of your \$100 purchase. Like paying for a pint and only ever drinking a midi.

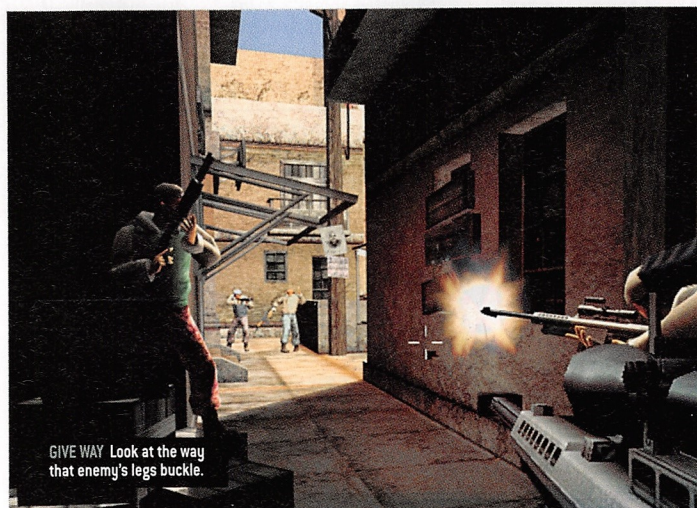
It's a viewpoint that could come across as glib, but it's one the team isn't taking lightly. Some concessionary features, such as unlimited adrenalin kits, are already in place. When your adrenalin bar is full after taking one of these time-consuming injections, it slowly boosts your health bar. Adrenalin is also increased through plugging lots of bad guys, so you're encouraged to shoot your way out of trouble even when badly injured, instead of finding a safe place (you're immobile when you use a kit) to apply gauze, a bandage and take a hit. It's a delicate balance that might just please the hardcore and the casual gamer.

What can't fail to please both is the graphics. Even this early in development it's one of the best-looking PS2 games we've seen, to the extent where you'd be forgiven for thinking it's a PC game. Everything looks so crisp and clean, with none of the jagged edges you usually associate with the PS2 library. It helps that the grittier look suits the grimy prison level in particular, while there are all sorts of impressive physics and whatnot whizzing around when you move objects, fire weapons and dismember enemies. If it can continue at this pace, we reckon *Cold Winter* could make a late charge and be the dark horse hit of 2004.

FIRST OPINIONS

What sticks in your mind are all the clever touches, which put a refreshing and sometimes even original spin on ordinary features such as using items and regaining health. The story structure and game length might take a while longer to win us over, so for now we'll just drool over the fab graphics.

/ JONATHAN TODD



GIVE WAY Look at the way that enemy's legs buckle.

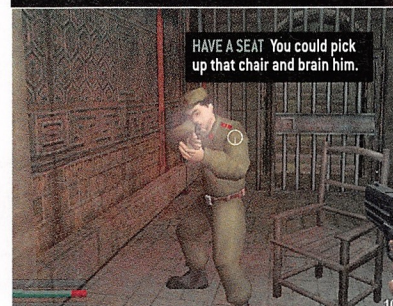


FALL GUY Looks like he's about to drop in on the action.

“BARRICADE A DOOR AND BUILD AN EXPLOSIVE, WHICH IS TRIGGERED WHEN ENEMIES ENTER.”



EYESORE Blind them with a flashbang grenade.



HAVE A SEAT You could pick up that chair and brain him.



PUDDLE LANE Well, we did warn you it was pretty gory.



WATCH YOUR BACK Stealth might not be important, but the element of surprise is a good weapon.

POSTCARDS FROM THE EDGE

THESE SNAPSHOTS OF LIFE ABROAD SET THE BLOODY TONE.



This is the bloke who's about to 'interrogate' you. Like any good torture scene, the victim is reflected in the torturer's glasses.



Sterling is almost crippled but still refuses to talk, so our torturer reaches for another sharp implement.



Cold Winter revels in bloodshed, especially when it's pouring out of Sterling. The more stylishly framed the better.



So this is what six months of brutal treatment does to you. Bond was inside for a year and only suffered a bad hair day.



> CHILD'S PLAY

A family burned to death in their own home, but at least he rescued the kids' doll.

“WHAT IT DOES SUPERBLY IS CONVEY A PALPABLE SENSE OF DANGER.”

FIREFIGHTER F.D.18

THE CITY'S GOING UP IN SMOKE AND THERE'S AN ARSONIST ON THE LOOSE. TIME TO CALL IN THE BLAZING SQUAD WITH REAL STREET CRED.

> GENRE	ACTION
> DEVELOPER	KONAMI
> PUBLISHER	KONAMI
> OUT	APRIL
> ONLINE	NO

IF ONLY WE'D PAID MORE ATTENTION TO FIRE

safety at school we could now be working in a heroic profession where we're automatically attractive to women and get to show off our oily six-packs in calendars. Strangely, there's been no demand yet for a PSW 2004 calendar. Such perks of the job, however, don't seem to interest *Firefighter's* Dean McGregor, whose total dedication to duty and excellent track record means he regards the word "casualty" isn't part of his vocabulary. It doesn't take our hero long to work out that a dozen towering infernos in one city is more than a coincidence, so he reluctantly hooks up with hardnosed TV news reporter Emilie Arvin to bring the arsonist to justice.

The opening level begins as fire spreads through a road tunnel with a handful of scattered survivors trapped between burnt-out cars and surrounded by flames. Once in McGregor's sight, their health bar begins to decrease and it's game over if any of them choke to death on fumes.

Your main tool is the standard hose (plus its different types of nozzle!), which produces an endless supply of water and can be taken anywhere without getting snagged on objects or running out of length. A quick blast is enough to extinguish a chunk of flames, eventually clearing a path to manoeuvre yourself through. Several types of fire require different kit, though in the heat of the moment it's not easy to distinguish, say, a chemical fire from a 'normal' one. For example, using water on oil-based fires in the tunnel turns them into huge fireballs, so you need to switch to foam blasts instead to smother the flames. McGregor can also kick through lighter obstacles such as boxes, but heavier doors and emergency exits call for a swing of the fire axe.

NO SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE

Firefighter superbly conveys a palpable sense of danger. When McGregor's nearest escape route is blocked and flames are inching closer, you're really under pressure to think quick and act fast. The reliance on scripted events means this tension is extinguished second time around, but the first time you play you're always edgily anticipating an explosion or a structure to collapse or give way beneath your feet. There's even the odd boss encounter, with fierce blazes having a 'health' bar and engulfing McGregor if you get too close.

The problem that *Firefighter* undoubtedly faces is how to avoid being a one-trick pony. With heavily scripted levels and no enemies as such, the rest of the game will need to come up with some big surprises to maintain interest. Later settings include a tower block and a luxury cruiser, but if the only puzzles you ever tackle are finding an obvious alternative route and choosing the right equipment to fight the different fires then the initial appeal won't last long. Scorching stuff so far though.

FIRST OPINIONS

It's an unusual game concept that we're surprised hasn't been done more often. Using an enemy that doesn't fight back and proves almost unstoppable is intriguing to say the least, though whether it can carry a whole game is doubtful. We'll soon see.

/ JONATHAN TODD



FIREFIGHTER F.D.18 **FACT!**

> SCORCHING

Backdrafts, chemical fires and flammable liquid fires must be fought using different techniques.

> BLAZING

Konami consulted real Japanese firefighters to accurately depict these different types of fire.

> SIZZLING

Medals are awarded based on how long you take and how many survivors are uninjured.

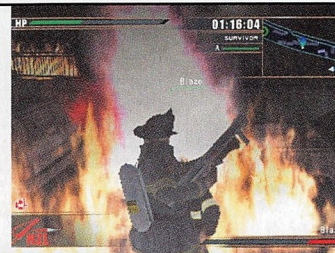
> BLISTERING

You choose the most suitable firefighting equipment to take on missions.



TUNNEL VISION

IT'S QUITE LITERALLY AN EXPLOSIVE START TO YOUR CAREER



20 SECONDS

Working as a team, we clear a path to reach the first survivor, but can't resist giving him a soaking while clearing the flames. Oh, how we laughed back at the station.

1MIN 20SECS

A car suddenly explodes and topples sideways blocking a route to the next survivor trapped behind it. Perhaps we can reach him via the emergency exit.

4MINS 30SECS

A full-scale blaze erupts, spitting out fireballs and hot ash, which can easily burn through protective clothing. It's no match for our super-nozzle blaster though.

5 MINUTES

It's not medals that count but doing our job and saving people's lives. Still, surely we deserve a shiny gold one and the public's adulation after all that effort. Well?



>DREAM MACHINE

Is it a car? Is it a boat? Is it a tank? Actually it's all three at once. Which is nice.

“GADETS APPEAR LIKE A SPACE-AGE VERSION OF JAMES BOND”

SPYHUNTER 2

THE FUTURISTIC SILVER BULLET CAR CAN NOW CHANGE INTO A SNOWMOBILE AT THE FLICK OF A SWITCH. EVEN JAMES BOND CAN'T DO THAT.

> GENRE	RACER
> DEVELOPER	MIDWAY
> PUBLISHER	ANGEL STUDIOS
> OUT	MARCH
> ONLINE	NO

THINGS ARE GOING WELL FOR SPYHUNTER.

Originally an Eighties arcade racer, the PS2 update was a huge success. Now a film starring WWE hero The Rock has been announced, flogging the classic franchise to a whole new generation of gamers. But before you get cynical and accuse PSW of looking at the new version of the game through rose-tinted specs, check out these screens. Yes, *SpyHunter 2* looks great – it stands proud next to the legions of identikit racers, spreading themselves over the shelves of game stores all over the country like desperately lewd hookers looking for a fast buck.

The mix of guns, cars and secret gadgets appear like a space-age version of *James Bond*. Then there's the shiny multi-tasking assault vehicle that can change into a snowmobile at the tap of a button. Take too much flak and not only does it blow up and lose its doors, but a hidden motorbike becomes controllable, speeding out of your chassis like a nifty escape pod.

SpyHunter 2 evokes a high-tech world of terrorism and nuclear warheads. Your missions vary – you're required to safely escort politicians, escape hostile zones and blow the crap out of practically every motorist you see. A covert Russian mission begins with a fairly easy brief: to follow and protect a crime warlord. By the end of the level, however, you'll be trading fire with a huge bomb-dropping freight plane on a flooded runway. The trick is to shift left and right on approach while holding the trigger button, and then just wallow in the hardcore blaster elements of the game. Though a racing game at heart, *SpyHunter 2* has as many explosions and as much rapid fire as any dedicated shooter.

As a tough, manly and violent game, it comes as a shock to discover bonus videos featuring the incredibly dainty and sweet Vanessa Carlton warbling away. Why is she there? A good question. Perhaps its makers feel that we might benefit from a live rendition of twinkly love song *1,000 Miles* to counter the incredible road rage experience of each level. Further extras include a history of *SpyHunter* and interviews with the makers themselves. If you're a fan you'll love every little factoid that spills from the slobbering mouths of the evangelical nerds.

SpyHunter 2 is short-lived entertainment, perfect for 30 minutes of loud, violent fun. With its cars, guns and gadgets, the only way it could get any more masculine would be if when you completed the game, naked women danced to the sounds of Los Lobos. *SpyHunter 2* is impulsive carefree fun and looks likely to place itself ahead of like-minded car-manglers *Destruction Derby Arenas* and *Twisted Metal: Black*. Just how long the fun will last isn't clear, but we'll keep all fingers firmly crossed.

FIRST OPINIONS

SpyHunter 2 is slick, fast and comes with a lively combination of speed and death as standard. But the jury is still out on how many hours you will actually spend plugging away at the back end of a tank-like car, so check back for the full PSW verdict next month.

/ RICHARD MELVILLE



ON YOUR BIKE



>> CAR! <<
The standard car can fire bullets, rockets, drop mines and use a jet turbo which makes jumping ramps a doddle. If your dad had a car like this you'd be the most popular kid at school.



>> BIKE! <<
Once shields have been pummelled and there's no way out, your car will explode, offering you a temporary reprieve from death via a bike which appears to have been nicked from *Tron*.



>> SNOWMOBILE! <<
Press Triangle and skis and extra-thick tyres transform your vehicle into a road-hugging tank of a machine. Useful for snow levels where going sideways isn't a good idea.



SPYHUNTER 2 FACT!

> TRANSFORMERS

Watch your car magically morph into a snowmobile or 4WD truck for the more demanding courses.

> RED ALERT

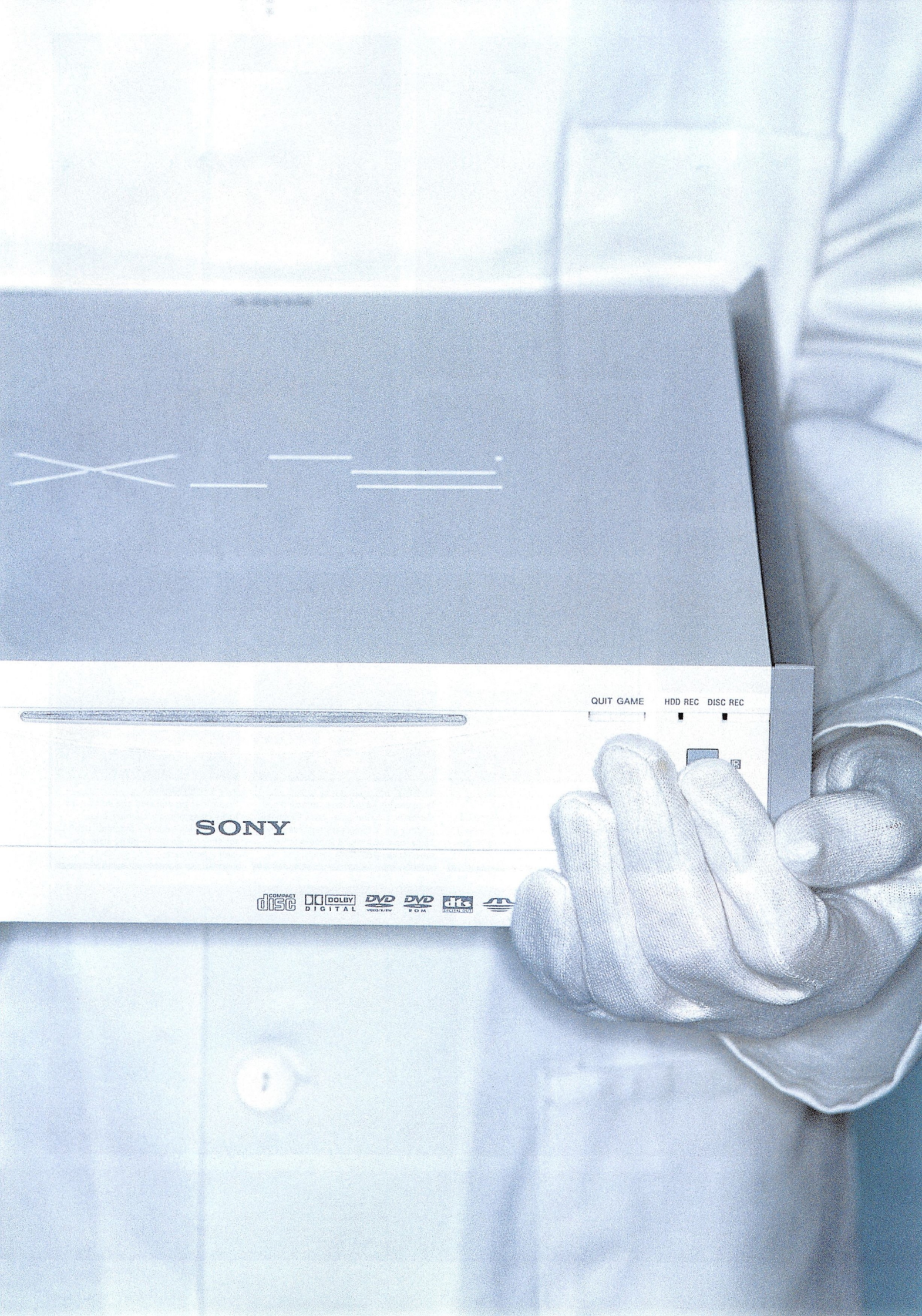
A new radar allows you to see all around, rather than just the road ahead. Get your guns ready...

> SPY VS SPY

A versus mode allows head-to-head violence with a friend who is likely to be far more intelligent than in-game rivals.

> BONUS!

Watch a potted history of the *SpyHunter* series from its arcade birth through to PS2 puberty.



SONY

COMPACT disc DOLBY DIGITAL DVD VIDEO DVD FOR dts SONY



PLAYSTATION TOO

Come, join us as we play with and dissect a PSX – Sony's new toy for the elite and wealthy video game glitterati.

THIS IS SONY'S NEW PSX. BASICALLY IT'S A PLAYSTATION2, DVD burner, TV tuner and hard drive enclosed in a really rather fetching white case. It sold out across Japan after its recent launch despite harsh media criticism along the lines of "what's the point?"

The point is that this is the set-top box, all-in-one convergence device we've all been dreaming about for the last ten years. It records TV to its internal drive, then lets you save your favourite shows to DVD. And you can play *Gran Turismo 4* while it's doing it.

Never mind the fact that this import machine doesn't work perfectly with Western TV's many variants, or that it's all in Japanese, or that it only outputs crappy AV and S-Video and a Japan-only high-definition TV signal – we still want one. So we bought one. Weighing about three and a half PlayStation2s and about as big as a slimline video recorder, there's nothing classier to be seen under your TV this year. But what can this mysterious Japanese super-machine do? Can it do it over here? And will we be able to put it back together again? Turn over and see.

WHAT CAN PSX DO?

See the power of Sony's all-in-one uberbox in extreme close-up detail. Adults only. This is explicit.

PSX plays games, records TV to its internal hard drive, lets you back up said TV shows to DVD, grabs data off USB devices and even displays photos from Sony Memory Stick gadgets. Primarily it's a media centre designed to replace your video recorder – PlayStation2 gaming is just a pleasant addition. Let's have a look at what else PSX can do.

■ IT'S A TV TUNER

Round the back you'll find two connections – one analogue and one digital. Sadly, both are only capable of receiving TV signals in the Japanese NTSC format. Upon connecting to a Japanese signal, you're treated to your very own Electronic Programme Guide, one with a fairly standard facility to record up to 30 programmes spread out over a 30-day period.

■ IT'S A VIDEO RECORDER

The model pictured here is the DESR-5000, which comes with an impressive 160Gb hard drive. Cleverly, PSX lets you record TV and play games at the same time. Thanks to the size of its internal hard drive, around 200 hours of programmes can be stored at its lowest picture quality setting. That's two year's worth of *Neighbours*. Been looking for an excuse to bin that 1980s matte grey VCR? This is it.

■ IT CAN READ MEMORY STICKS

We've spent the last five years wondering what the hell the point is of Sony's stupid Memory Stick – now we know. PSX has a slot to take the pricey media storage cards, with the machine coming with built-in support for pulling pics from Sony's Stick. Sadly there's no support for rival formats like the widely used CompactFlash format, but that's Sony for you. Always thinking about its monopoly.

■ IT CONNECTS VIA USB

If removing the Memory Stick from your Sony digital devices is too technical for you, then you'll be pleased to hear that this white super-machine can read data directly from all Sony USB devices. Yep, PSX wants to replace your PC too. Now all you have to do is stick your Sony digital camera into PSX's USB hole and it'll drag all your shots into its internal photo album. It only works with Sony cameras at the moment, although Sony promise that drivers which allow PSX access to other cameras will be made available to Japanese buyers soon.

■ PLAY GAMES

Oh yeah, it's a PS2 too. This being an import machine only Japanese games are supported, although thanks to Sony's generosity both PlayStation2 and PSone games are supported. Remember the PSone? It was small, grey and broke down quite often. Then again, it did give birth to *Gran Turismo* and *Metal Gear Solid*, so it wasn't all bad.

■ PHOTO SLIDE SHOWS

Bore relatives like never before with 160 gigabytes of photos of your trip to Borneo, thanks to PSX's slideshow facilities. Not the most exciting feature, granted, but we're trying to be comprehensive here.

■ COMPONENT OUTPUT

Audio-video boffins were stunned by PSX's lack of component output – the four-pronged connection format that offers the best picture quality going – but worry not. PSX comes with a D-Terminal link, which is the Japanese equivalent of our super-high quality component signal. You can't use it here on our TVs, so you're lumbered with using either standard AV or S-Video if you import one. The postage on getting a TV sent over from Japan is rather high, so we're assuming you don't have a Japanese telly.

■ PLAY DVDS

Hardly even worth listing as a feature this, seeing as how just about every device within 20 yards of your TV can also play DVDs nowadays. Anyway, PSX can also play DVDs, and there's an 'Optical Out' for hooking it into an amplifier to enjoy *Starship Troopers* with full Dolby Digital or DTS sound as the director intended.

■ DVD-R AND DVD-RW RECORDING

An ideal feature for Ebay pirates selling compilation DVDs of TV series, PSX allows everything you've recorded off the telly to be backed up onto DVD. It records your saved shows to DVD at 12x speed, which means you can fill an entire disc with *Home and Away* in around ten minutes.

Hardcore techno-men are angered by the lack of support for the alternate DVD+RW format, although Sony Japan's promise of a downloadable update to add compatibility with the slightly superior format in the future has sated their anger.

■ DUMP MUSIC TO HARD DRIVE

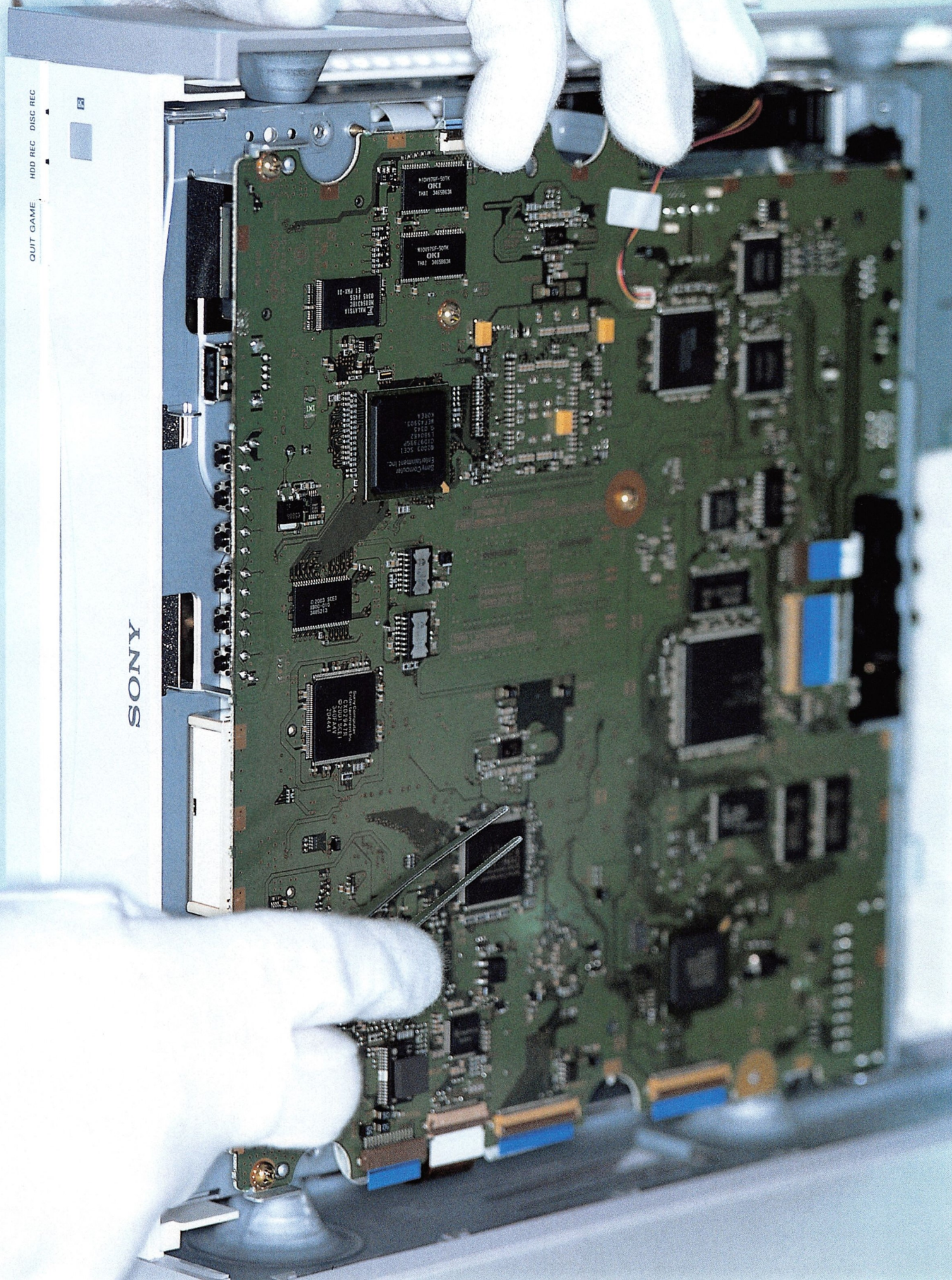
Stick in a CD, then rip its contents to PSX's hard drive to keep all your tunes in one convenient place. Currently it only supports Sony's ATRAC compression at the moment – nor will it rip CD-R discs you've created yourself – so that collection of MP3s you keep hidden on your work PC can't be copied across just yet. MP3 support is another feature Sony Japan says it will include on a later software update – and will no doubt be a standard feature on the Aussie machine when it's released.

■ CONNECT TO A PC

This feature doesn't work in this initial batch of machines, thanks to Sony running out of time to make it work. Seriously. In future versions of PSX the Ethernet socket round the back will be fully operational, allowing online gaming and the organisation of your tunes, photos and videos via PC. At the moment though, it's not working. .







SONY

QUIT GAME HDD REC DISC REC



IMPORTERS BEWARE...

Most of PSX's killer features won't work in Australia and it's not quite the everything-in-one box we expected.

■ HARDCORE JAPANESE MENUS

Thinking of importing one? Well, not only are there doubts over whether the key TV-recording feature is going to work over here, but the remaining features of PSX are shrouded behind a mask of Japanese text. There is no English option, so you'll need to enrol in some Japanese language lessons rather sharpish if you want to explore its full potential. If you would rather learn how to burn DVDs and rip CDs to the hard drive of a machine that doesn't speak your language, and waste hundreds of dollars in the process, then go right ahead. We won't stop you.

■ USB 1.1 ONLY

How backwards is this? Despite being designed as the ultimate media hub, PSX's use of the outdated last generation USB spec is a big mistake. Those 2Mb digital photos will take an age to transfer across – here's hoping the faster USB 2.0 is included in the Aussie version. And, right, how come there's only ONE USB port? One? That's penny-pinching design madness from Sony.

■ NO I LINK/FIREWIRE

The PS2 was stupidly ahead of its time in having an iLink (FireWire) socket located on the front. With the USB 2.0-rivalling format only now really taking off – especially for camcorders and cameras – the dropping of this magic, super-fast little data hole is something of a puzzle.

■ TV TUNER NOT COMPATIBLE

Yes, the Japanese can use it like a TIVO to record TV, but at the moment it looks like it's impossible to capture any PAL TV. Set up specifically to record NTSC signals in the Japanese broadcast range, it appears no amount of kanji reading skills will let you set up a PSX here. It looks like it just won't work. Nor will the Electronic Programme Guide. You could still use it to record by hooking it to a video recorder and using that to switch channels, but that'd be an ever-so slight missing of the entire point.

■ JAPANESE GAMES ONLY

Another sore point for the keen importer: our prohibitively expensive Japanese PSX only plays Japanese games. Also, the round-the-back placement of the two controller ports isn't ideal, and their vertical orientation means no multi-tap options for three or four-player gaming.

■ NO MP3 PLAYBACK

Now come on. We all know MP3s are bad, but if Sony's serious about making PSX the ultimate media hub it NEEDS to let us transfer our painstakingly collected stash of MP3s across. All those logos, but not the one we really

need. Subtract one point from review score.

■ CONTROLLER NOT INCLUDED

Considering it came in a box large enough to house a Japanese family and all their pet robot cows, the lack of a spunky new white Dual Shock controller is shocking. In the Japanese box you get a bog standard triple-pronged AV lead for the worst possible TV picture, the remote (which is a work of art, admittedly) and Japanese TV tuner leads. It's a bit light on extras. There isn't even an optical cable for plugging it in to an amp. Shame on you, you tight-fisted Japanese mega corporation.

■ THE DVD SLOT

PSX uses the slot-loader technique. We've had a few bad experiences with slot-loading DVD machines and CD players, thanks to the way they pull the disc in and invariably leave it as scratched as a leather sofa in a house full of kittens. For a machine that does so much and will be constantly switching from DVDs to game discs and back again, we're not sure the slot is a good idea.

■ SO DID WE MANAGE TO PUT IT BACK TOGETHER AGAIN?

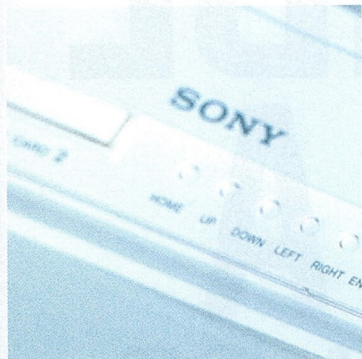
Yes, but we made a mess of the screws by using too big a screwdriver, and we couldn't do them up very tightly after.

■ GENUINE INNOVATION OR MULTIMEDIA SCAM?

It looks great. If you want something to put under your TV and make you look like some sort of technology KING who's been to Japan and bought the lot, get one of these. But if you actually want something useable, functional and user-friendly, PSX's lack of English text support makes owning an import machine folly. Paying \$1400 for something that only half works over here isn't cool.

The features ARE impressive though. PSX is a media centre first and a games machine second. Competing more with high-end DVD and hard drive recorders than PUNY games machines, PSX is ideal for those of you currently thinking about buying a DVD recorder and binning the old VCR. It's quite possibly the nicest gadget yet invented thanks to its superb white case and solid build quality. But, for any Aussie punters thinking of getting a Japanese one on import, it's little more than a PS2 and hard drive in a nicer box.

However, when it arrives here, in English, with full TV-recording abilities AND all its existing DVD recording functions, PSX will become the most essential piece of home cinema kit there is. And it'll play your PS2 games. So wait. It's better than other gaming machines because it also records DVDs and TV – and it's better than other DVD and TV recorders because it also plays PS2 games. As long as Sony charges less than a million pounds for it, PSX



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LIFT OFF Lure Jaws and his teeth towards the electricity.



SHIELDS UP Destroy the generators in another sci-fi-like level.



NEAR MISS Bond can run or roll out of the way of bullets.



OBJECTIVE COMPLETE: Intercept patrol jeep before it reaches the village

HEAT-SEEKER Driving's only fun if you get to blow stuff up.



YOU AND UZI ARMY? Mya takes over gun duty while you drive.

JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING



BOND IS BACK TO UNDERTAKE HIS MOST VIOLENT MISSION YET. BUT IS THE OVER-SEXED SECRET AGENT FIRING BLANKS OR PACKING A FULL LOAD?

> TYPE	SHOOTING
> PLAYERS	1-4
> OUT	FEBRUARY
> PUBLISHER	EA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	EA
> ONLINE	NO

YOU'RE ABSEILING DOWN THE SIDE OF A building. It's on fire, naturally. Upon landing you blow away eight enemies just for the hell of it, plant an explosive, scarper double-quick and continue rappelling down the side of the building before it collapses. It might have been easier to creep past those blokes, but that wouldn't have been as much fun. Now there's a bit of plot. Look,

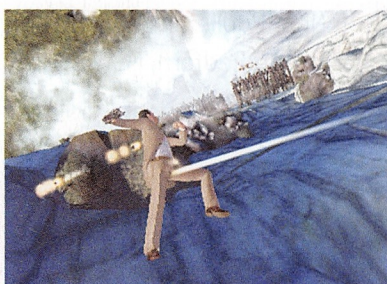
that's Dame Judi Dench and John Cleese telling Bond off for being sexist and not looking after the gadgets as usual. Don't they look good, eh?

Damn! You've been so busy admiring the actors' likenesses and the Bond girl's ample chest that you've completely missed out on the story overview. Something to do with nanobots taking over the world and a villain who's the

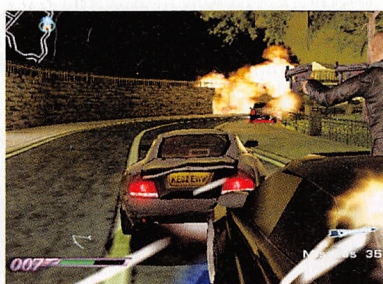
protégé of Christopher Walken's baddie from *A View To A Kill*. Or something. Oh well, plot has never been an obstacle to Bond movies, let alone Bond games. Besides, you're now riding a motorbike in pursuit of a train and blowing up choppers with missiles, so what the hell? Your head is pounding with the sounds of bullets as the Bond theme blares away in the background – don't worry, the pain will go away. Eventually.

NBODY DOES IT BETTER

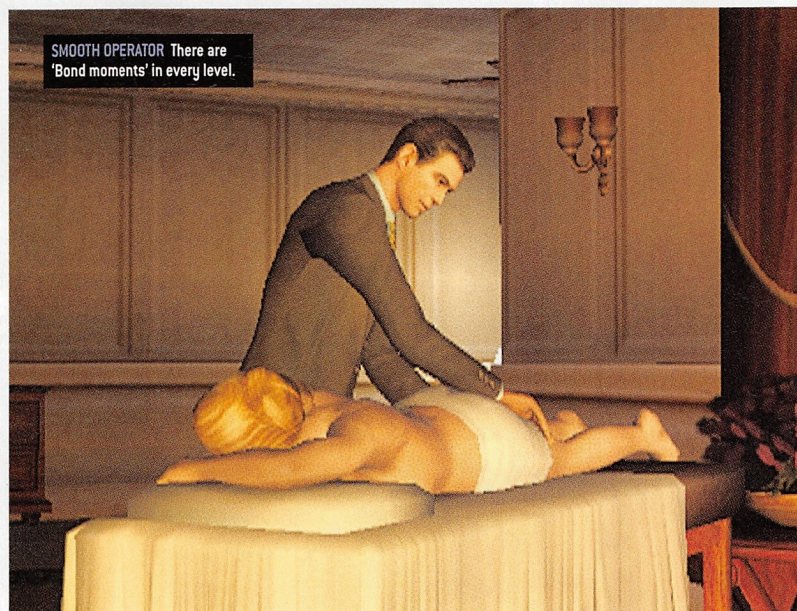
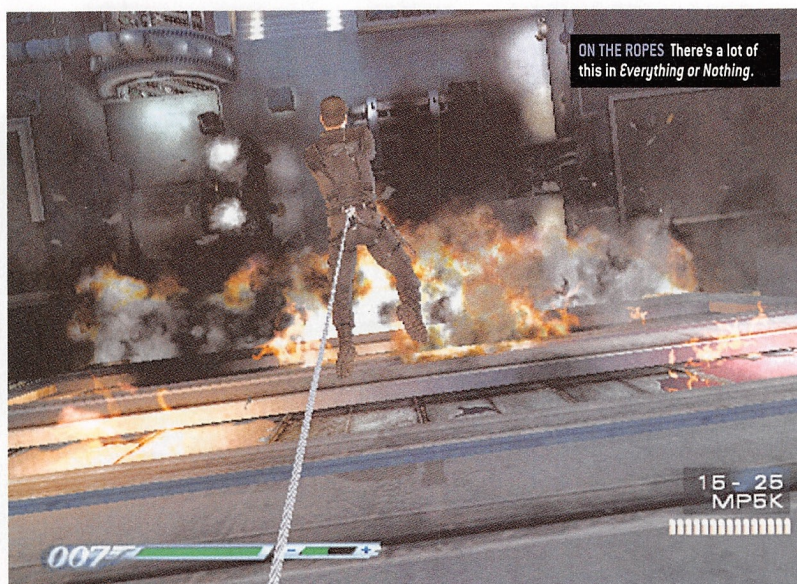
Yep, the first ten minutes of *Everything or Nothing* are all it'll take to convince you that this is the best Bond game ever on PS2. Not by a massive margin. Not because it's radically different to previous escapades *Agent Under Fire* and *Nightfire*, other than being a third-person game. No, it's because the people behind it know how to deliver undiluted Bond. And deliver it they do. *Everything or Nothing* combines the charm of Connery, the silliness of Moore, the cold violence



FREE FALL Avoid gunfire as well as going splat on the rocks.



BACK DRAFT Fire a smokescreen to throw them off your trail.



of Dalton and the production values of the Brosnan era. Lazenby? Well, nobody remembers Lazenby so it doesn't really matter.

The switch to third-person is more than a vanity concession to Pierce Brosnan too. Sure, the second-best Bond ever looks and sounds like the smooth Lothario he is, but being able to see 007 for the first time is really about changing the way the game plays rather than admiring how dapper he looks in a tux. And what a difference this makes. Now you're given a choice whether to put that Walther PPK to frequent use, or holster it and be a bit cleverer in the way you dispatch your foe. Since enemies are credited with some intelligence, you may want to consider alternative methods of dispatching them, rather than just rushing in and exercising your license to kill. Fortunately, levels are carefully designed to offer plenty of hiding places and cover points. There are also a number of switches and levers dotted around that, when activated, usually move or drop heavy objects onto groups of enemies, saving you the job of shooting them all.

00 HEAVEN

Don't get the wrong idea though. *Everything or Nothing* doesn't concern itself with having 007 piddle about in the shadows, like some amateur wannabe Sam Fisher. Bond is more than happy to use force of the lethal kind, and has no qualms about nicking weapons and ammo from the dead either. Since armour is stupidly left lying around in the usual inappropriate locations, he'll happily

snap that up too. A silky-smooth auto-targeting system ensures you simply can't miss and, as such, areas can be rattled through at the expense of bags of health if you keep your trigger-finger down – at least on the easy Operative and Medium Agent difficulty settings. The harder 00 Agent option consists of the standard objectives but requires a little more care to deal with more intelligent enemies.

Bond isn't only handy with a firearm mind. Move close to an opponent and he batters him round the head with the butt of his gun. He's not above throwing bottles, swinging crowbars and so on either. Creep up on an enemy and you're even given a slow-mo sequence of Bond taking

"THE FIRST TEN MINUTES ARE ALL IT'LL TAKE TO CONVINCE YOU THAT THIS IS THE BEST BOND GAME EVER ON PS2."

him out. *Everything or Nothing* could give *Enter The Matrix* a good hiding in the fisticuffs stakes. Little skill is actually involved; you just button-bash and watch Bond unleash different kicks and punches, but at least the blows look and sound like they're connecting and causing hurt.

DO PAY ATTENTION, 007

Naturally enough, Q is on hand to supply you with a hefty arsenal of gadgets. But seeing as their use is so clearly signposted there's little actual ingenuity involved. What usually happens

THRILL-A-MINUTE

ONE HECTIC HOUR IN THE LIFE OF JAMES BOND...

★ 23 MINS

The first of many driving missions finds Bond chasing a train on his off-road Chimera motorbike. He also rides a sportier Triumph Daytona 600.



★ 31 MINS

Bond's old nemesis Jaws has evidently forgotten the events of *Moonraker*. Push him into the sparks to electrocute him via his metal teeth.



★ 44 MINS

One of the duller missions finds Bond in a chopper destroying shield generators. It's like a rejected level from *Star Wars Starfighter*.



★ 60 MINS

This is more like it. The invisible car might be a load of sci-fi bollocks, but Bond needs to use the disguise wisely since the effect doesn't last.

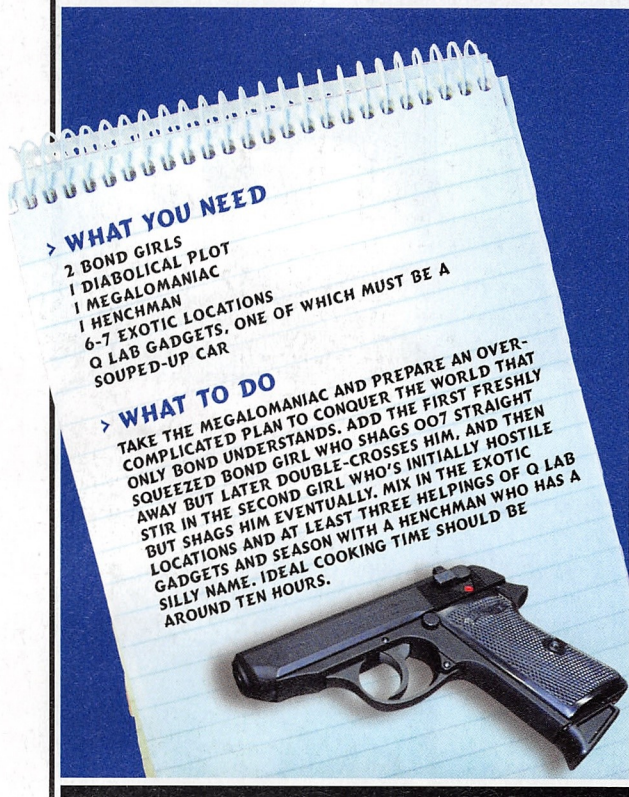


is that you come to a dead-end and must either locate the one and only point to attach your rappet to, or find the solitary crevice through which the electronic Q spider can be sent ahead. You can switch control between Bond and the nimble arachnid at will (unless Bond is attacked off-screen, in which case control automatically reverts back to him) and it comes fitted with an explosive for when its usefulness has run out. The drawbacks are that you can't rotate the camera around it, making control that little bit harder, and enemies can shoot or squash it. There's also an electromagnetic pulse device in the shape of a 20c piece, though the only time you use it is during a rather pointless *Goldfinger*-type situation when Bond's nether regions are under threat from a laser. There are no other gadgets in your inventory at this point so it's not exactly hard to figure out how to escape.

Like the movies, *Everything or Nothing* is at its best when delivering extravagant set pieces. Continuing the ridiculous action from that trademark opener on the burning building is a thrilling dive down a treacherous cliff face to reach Shannon Elizabeth's typically helpless Bond girl who's been pushed from a helicopter. You can blast enemies stationed on platforms on the way down while also weaving from side to side to avoid rocks and trees. Hit a platform or a tree and Bond flips over from the impact superbly. Hit a rock though and Miss Money Penny will be swapping feeble sexual >

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

ALL THE INGREDIENTS TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL BOND ADVENTURE ARE RIGHT HERE.



BRIGHT EYES It's dark so you use thermal vision. Simple, really.



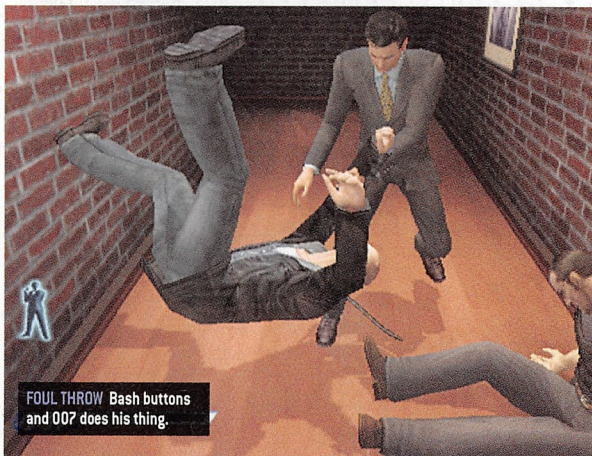
NO FAIR Driving levels contain multiple missions. Fail one and you must restart the entire level.



LOCK ON Driving is made easier thanks to the auto-targeting.



SHOOTER ON RAILS The mine is a simple run-and-gun mission.



banter with a new 007.

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

These set-pieces also extend to the driving sections, which make up about a third of the game and thankfully aren't as dull as they used to be. Well, apart from the one featuring the Aston Martin V12 Vanquish, now kitted out in Q's lab with a handy acid slick. Sounds like a pretext for onroad mayhem, but turns out to be a snoozeworthy trawl against the clock to get from A to B and then from B to C. Switching control to a more pedestrian truck midway through is just a bad idea full stop.

Other driving missions are similarly routine if a bit more exciting – the two tank-based levels, for example. One is a familiar *Medal of Honor*-style stint on the gun turret. The other is a more outlandish blitz on the Kremlin itself. There's a great twist earlier too where you impersonate a rally driver and must win a three-lap contest against seven other drivers. A similar story development occurs in *Mafia*, but this race is more gripping because you can slam opponents into explosive barrels at the side of the track.

ON YER BIKE

The pick of the vehicles is undoubtedly the motorcycle. Our fear a few months back – that these levels would only be played out on long straight roads – is quashed early on when you pursue the previously mentioned train through a winding canyon, eventually driving underneath the end carriage so Bond can clamber on board. In another mission you steer around narrow village streets, zipping through the narrowest of gaps between enemy tanks and using ramps to soar over roadblocks. Granted, the duel against Jaws in his behemoth of a truck occurs on an unfeasibly straight road, but the carnage that's involved as you fend off motorbikes, try not to hit civilians with your missiles and pull off a super cool swerve manoeuvre to avoid an overturned tanker is so spectacular you probably won't care.

At the end of every mission you're given a score for a score's sake based on the number of enemies subdued, accuracy, weapon efficiency, mission duration and special Bond moments completed. And where would 007 be without his trademark Bondisms? These moments are scattered throughout each level and take the



STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE Driving missions are a bit vacuous.



Jean Le Rouge

HANG THE DJ Mya pays the price for a naff theme song.

14-10 MP5K



IT'S A BLAST Take the tank for a spin and let off a few rounds.



HELL ON WHEELS The best missions are on the bike.

Missiles 40



REMOTE CONTROL This car goes places that 007 can't.

"COMBINES CONNERY CHARM, MOORE SILLINESS, DALTON VIOLENCE AND THE BROSNAN ERA'S PRODUCTION VALUES."

form of anything from crashing through an advertising hording on a motorbike to pretending to be a masseuse and giving an unsuspecting female client a rubdown. A burst of the brassy theme tune accompanies each one you find, but you'll have to do a bit of exploring on foot and be adventurous in the driving sections to uncover them all.

NANO A BIG NO-NO

The real replay value lies in the multiplayer modes. Sort of. The slap in the face of PAL gamers is that we can't go online. This might not be a bad thing come to think of it and we do still get the main two-player co-op mode, only offline. It's exclusive to PS2 and offers 12 new missions instead of just regurgitating the single-player campaign. These levels are tailored for two players too, with puzzles requiring both players to solve, and team

targeting that indicates if you're both aiming at the same enemy. Three other games are included to help make up the numbers. Arena is a single-room mashfest mode for up to four players - unfortunately, a poor man's *Powerstone*. Race is a two-player battle to complete the game in the fastest possible time with the highest accuracy, where kills earn time bonuses and player deaths incur time penalties. Finally, Scramble is similar but this time two players compete for the best score.

There are a few extra wobbles that leave *Everything or Nothing* both shaken and stirred though. The level where you pursue another helicopter through a narrow mountain pass isn't good at all, mainly due to the cumbersome handling of the chopper. Then there's the sole stealth mission that ends as soon as you're spotted. As you might have gathered, the game isn't ideally suited to Bond creeping around undetected, and the inclusion of a nano suit gadget that turns him translucent is almost as silly as that invisible car from *Die Another Day*. Wait a sec - that appears here too! Oh, and naming the agent character voiced by R&B warbler Mya after the singer (presumably at her

request) is just distracting.

But distractions are all these really are. After a couple of misfires *Everything or Nothing* kick-starts the Bond franchise on PS2, living up to everything that *Agent Under Fire* and *Nightfire* failed to supply. Slick and professional presentation is what we take for granted with EA games, but here it's been married to loud, fast and violent fun. The fact that Bond is the franchise to benefit is a bonus.

/ JONATHAN TODD

PS2 VERDICT

UPPERS	DOWNERS
> Reeks of Bond	> Some dud levels
> Improved driving levels	> Forgettable story
> Excellent set-pieces	> Play can slow down
> Top presentation	> No online mode
GRAPHICS > Familiar faces, smooth all round	8
SOUNDS > Rousing music and deafening gunfire	9
GAMEPLAY > Standard blasting with standout moments	8

OVERALL SCORE

A triumphant return for a Bond. He's sleeker, more assured and isn't afraid to invoke his license to kill. *Everything or Nothing* is almost everything you could want from a Bond game.

8



HOG SLOG Even attacking enemies can be a chore.



DR EVIL Robotnik's up to his old tricks. Bastard.



CHECK US OUT Team Sonic, minus the famous 'hog.'



Wow, my head's spinning!

SO WILL YOURS *Sonic Heroes* at its fastest is disorientating.



SPEED FREAKS It's damn fast, but strangely limp.

SONIC HEROES

EVERYONE LOVES SONIC. IF YOU DON'T LOVE SONIC YOU'RE A HEARTLESS BEAST. COME ON, SONIC! BE IN A GOOD GAME FOR A CHANGE.



> TYPE	PLATFORM
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	SEGA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	SEGA
> ONLINE	NO

THREE-DIMENSIONAL PLATFORM GAMES.

Up there alongside nylon underpants and poking paper clips into plug sockets in the all-time list of bad ideas if you ask us, with their vague, wobbly control systems never really working. Never. Ever. Running "into" the screen just isn't the same as running "along" it, a problem no one who makes games has ever really managed to sort out.

We get around this by approaching all 3D

platform games with really low expectations. "Let's just presume they'll be rubbish and take it from there," we tell ourselves. Well, great news everyone – *Sonic Heroes* isn't all that rubbish. Sega's thoughtfully stripped out all the "adventure" nonsense that smothered the *Sonic Adventure* series to death, leaving *Sonic Heroes* a faster, simpler and more *Sonic*-like experience. It's just you, going as fast as you can through an unrelated series of different levels.

There are four teams to choose from, each containing a team of three characters. Although abilities and overall difficulty differs between the teams they all contain a speed, a power and a flying character. You switch between each depending on the challenge ahead. Initially, it makes sense to scan levels with the slower, safer, power guy. Then, once you know the place, start using the speed runner to do it quicker and the flying creature to explore more. It takes a lot of getting used to though, with play often grinding to a halt when you're unsure who to use.

Playing as the main character, the other two help you out as you go. Unfortunately, they can mess things up by interfering. Picture the scene: we're controlling Sonic, three enemies await destruction. We bounce on one, lock onto the

second and, then, at the crucial moment, just as we're flying through the air to kill the third, our mate Tails pops up and kills it for us. So we're left flying through the air with nothing to hit, flying off the platform to our death as a result.

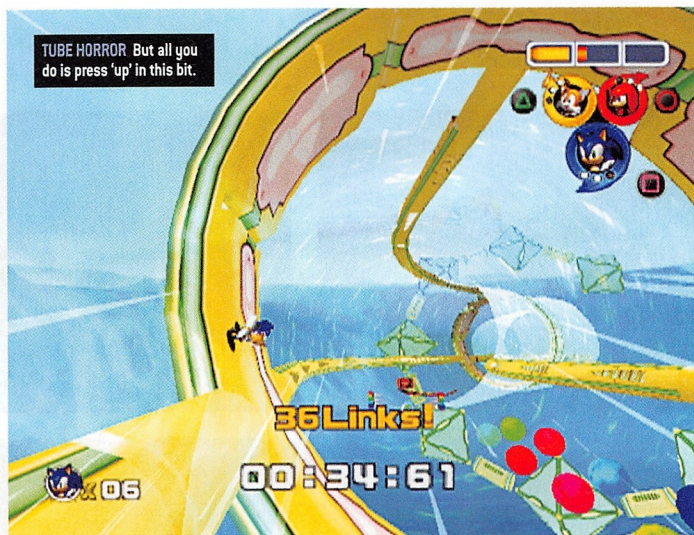
Even when not hindered by your so-called helpers, getting around the three-dimensional *Sonic* world is a chore. Running really fast around levels without edges isn't much fun. Your character will go into his "Ooh, I'm falling!" balance animation and stop if you walk too close to an edge, but when you've been fired out of a canon at a few hundred miles an hour towards an edgeless platform, death is your only option.



RING THING Rings still go "dring" when you get 'em.

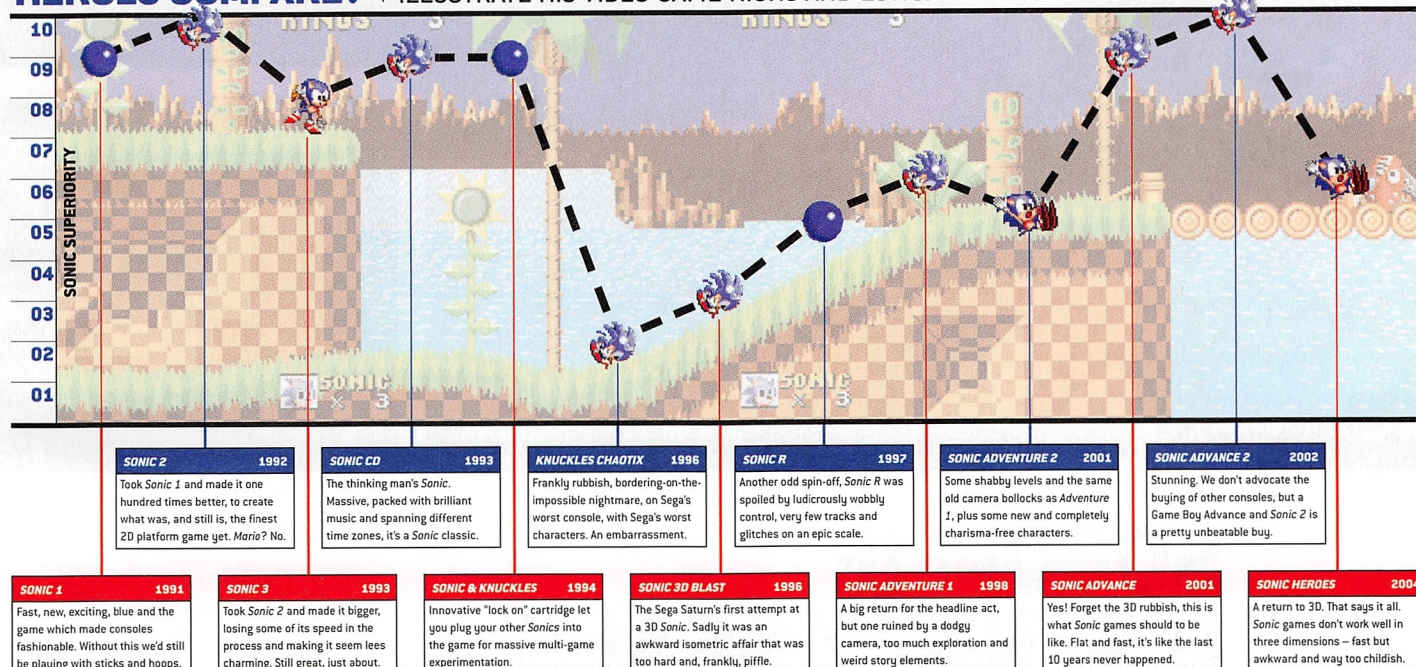


INTO THE SCREEN Is bad. Across the screen is good. Fact.



HOW DOES HEROES COMPARE?

SONIC'S BEEN AROUND SINCE 1991, HERE WE ILLUSTRATE HIS VIDEO GAME HIGHS AND LOWS.



The combination of speed and 3D makes *Heroes* the most annoying *Sonic Team* creation yet. Despite that, it's also one of the easiest to get through, with the levels becoming shorter and simpler as you progress. By the time you've reached the haunted mansion level, you're willing it to end.

When it's good, though, *Sonic Heroes* is... well, all right. Beating a nice, wide, fast section with a couple of kills and some speedy grinds feels great, just like *Sonic* should. But those bits are rare. There are too many "on rails" sections where you're not in control at all, but just pressing Up to run. Occasionally you get to press



WAAAHAH CRAZY Yet surprisingly unfun. Is that even a word?

"SONIC ROCKS! UNFORTUNATELY THOUGH HE'LL NEVER ROCK IN 3D, WHERE HIS SPEED BECOMES A HINDERENCE."

Down to run away from something. It's all about speed, it's all about a simpler *Sonic* experience.

In *Sonic Heroes* you just run. We love that. Your running is constantly hindered by having to swap characters, falling off platforms and having to replay the bland, uninteresting levels time and time again when you die, but we still just about love it. We don't like the stupid, child-like, idiot voices of the characters though, especially Big the Cat who sounds like Scooby Doo with his tongue cut out. It seems like *Sonic Heroes* has been aimed at a very young audience, with its kiddy voices, constant hints and reminders and simple, out-of-your-hands speed sections.

Nor do we like the Bonus round much, because it's too fast and the link-maintaining race challenge relies as much on random chance as it does on skill. The crazy, incoherent Casino level is a chore to get through, with numerous platforms to fall off and get sent, crying, back to the start. And you will. This can be frustrating.

Don't get us wrong, though. We love *Sonic*. You know those drawings of *Sonic* cutting *Mario's* head off with a big sword that some games magazines used to print? We drew those. *Sonic* rocks! Unfortunately though, he'll never rock in 3D, where his speed becomes a hindrance and only serves to remove the element of high-velocity control that is *Sonic's* reason to live. If you really love *Sonic* you'll like this. Not as much as you should, but it'll do. If you're not a *Sonic* fan *Sonic Heroes* can be missed out altogether.

/ MARK BELMARO

PSW VERDICT		
UPPERS	> As fast as you like	DOWNERS
	> Less story nonsense	
	> Cream the Rabbit	
	> Tails	
	> Falling over edges	
GRAPHICS	> No great leap forward from Dreamcast days	6
SOUNDS	> Kids voices, bland pop music, not much else	6
GAMEPLAY	> Super-easy, with little replay value	6
OVERALL SCORE		
It all goes a bit wrong sometimes and some levels are a chore, but there is some <i>Sonic</i> charm here for diehard fans. For everyone else, it's a glitchy, kiddy, messy, short game.		
		6



SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS



ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH, DEAR FRIENDS, AND THIS TIME REMEMBER YOUR ROCKET LAUNCHERS. THE ORIGINAL PS2 ONLINE SHOOTER IS BACK.

> TYPE	SHOOTING
> PLAYERS	1-4
> OUT	MARCH
> PUBLISHER	SONY
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	ZIPPER INT.
> ONLINE	YES

THE FIRST SOCOM GAME WAS SONY'S rallying call to online gamers. "Come with us", said the lovably inscrutable Japanese company, "And we will show you sights, the like of which have never been seen by living gamers. We will give you the power to frag men across continents. The power to exchange instantaneous insults with Kiwi trailer trash. And the power to entirely reinvent yourself as a crack marksman known only as PSWroxxx47". Well, they weren't entirely wrong. *SOCOM* delivered a proper console-based internet shooter, but left gamers feeling a little hard done by in certain areas. For example, the single-player game wasn't quite up to scratch. Controlling your team mates offline felt a bit like working in the monkey house of London Zoo. Some of the online options were a bit limited. But overall, *SOCOM* delivered the tactical online experience it promised.

Now *SOCOM II* sneaks up, a mere six months or so after the first game. We know that these days it can take years to craft the perfect experience, so you'd be forgiven for having some doubts about a sequel that appears

so soon. If you were thinking that all Sony has had time to do is conjure up some more levels while keeping the gameplay pretty much identical... well, you wouldn't be far wrong. Don't think we're totally against this idea, though. For a start, *SOCOM II*'s gameplay is a solid mix of shooting and sneaking, all enlivened by the fact that in the single-player game you're in command of three other ops, and online you're accompanied by up to seven team members. It's still fairly unique, and it's still a whole lot of fun.



OPEN PLAN Some online arenas have a lot more open spaces.

THIS MEANS WAR

Single-player mode will be odd for new players at first. You see, instead of having to shoot each and every enemy before they see you, you're far more likely to watch as your team mates take them down before you can blink. Give them the right commands and you'll form co-ordinated stealth attacks. Muck it up and you'll send your men into battle to get shot like dogs. The biggest drawback to single-player nirvana is that every time a stray bullet whizzes through your skull, you don't just return to a waypoint a short way back in the level.



BAND OF BROTHERS These guys back you up. You'll need them.



NO FAIR Remember that enemies can take advantage of the cover, too.



HA HA HA! Enemies can do a victory dance on your body online.

Instead you have to start the whole mission again. Given that most missions consist of fairly complex interlocking goals and can take tens of minutes to complete, we wouldn't be surprised if it's a rather cynical ploy to extend the life of the game. There's just no point in this. It's not even as if it's more realistic – after all, if they wanted to keep it real, you'd have to blowtorch your copy of the game the minute you died for the first time. Which would be only slightly more stupid than what actually happens.

On the good side, the shonky artificial intelligence from the first game has been substantially improved, meaning you won't be able to hang around idiotic enemies for ages before they notice. Set off alarms and, although

“LIKE A CRAZED ONLINE VERSION OF HIDE-AND-SNEAK CROSSED WITH VAGUELY *GRAND THEFT AUTO*-STYLE RUNNING AND STRAFING.”

you won't be immediately killed, you'll disrupt enemies for miles around, meaning that the whole situation becomes far too chaotic to carry out most objectives. Crucially, it's not game over because you can shoot your way through the enemies if you have to, providing the crucial mix of stealth and action that makes *SOCOM II* what it is.

But all this carping about the offline mode shouldn't be taken to heart, because *SOCOM II*

isn't about the single-player game at all, really. Sure, it's a laugh for a while, and sure, it's a great way to perfect your tactics. But a training ground is all it is. It's the online component that's really vital to the success of *SOCOM II*, so we're going to delve into its sticky underbelly.

SEALS OF APPROVAL

Just like in the original game, the action does a nausea-inducing 90-degree shift once you're online. Where once there was silent creeping and planned, carefully reconned kills, there's now a lot of running, a lot of strafing, and a lot of meaningless spraying of bullets. This isn't your standard first-person shooter, although if you like, *SOCOM II* can be played from a SEALs' eye view. >

ATTENTION ALL UNITS!

HERE'S HOW ONLINE SHOOTING PLAYS OUT IN *SOCOM II*.



Before the game starts, you can indulge in text-based chat or simply press the circle button to speak to the other online folks. You know, with your actual mouth! Get over it.



In this game of Escort, you must ferry these computer-controlled VIPs to the safety of the extraction point without getting them shot by the terrorists along the way.



No, not like that. If you're shot and killed, you can respawn in some modes but in other games you'll be out of action for a whole five minutes. Like, shit.



Time to check out how your team are doing then, by following them round as an invisible observer. You can even shout encouraging advice in their ears.



Nor is it a true multiplayer stealth title. It's more like a kind of crazed online version of hide-and-seek crossed with vaguely *Grand Theft Auto*-style mad shooting. And a lot of whooping, too, thanks to the USB headset from the first game. Because PSW played the game before it was out here, (obviously) the only people online were the grizzled cowboys from the North American server. It's an online Tattooine out there, folks, only instead of furry aliens and galactic pirates, it's

fully mulleted rednecks, giant gangstas with the voice of a robotic Barry White, and all sorts of vocal scum and villainy. Most people really do sound robotic, because you can choose to 'mod' your voice to make it unrecognisable. This has the dubious added charm of making you think you're playing against a whole chatroom full of daleks.

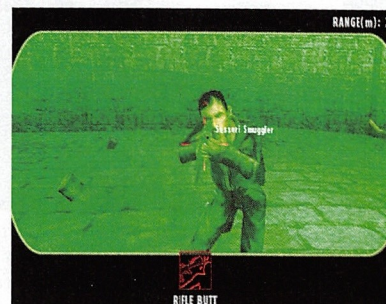
A couple of new game modes have been added to the deathmatching, flag capturing and bomb exploding missions from the first game. Breach mode has the SEALs trying to gun their way into a terrorist stronghold, and Escort mode has SEALs taking computer characters to safety while the terrorists try to know them out. This last mode's proving the best matches are those where the full complement of 16 players are warring against each other – not so much a skirmish as a full blown war. And every individual act of heroism and dirty tactics can be punctuated with vocal commentary. There's nothing funnier than seeing a terrorist being shot through the head and collapse on the floor in a heap, going "Oh, shit!" Aside from the usual expletive laden backchat, if you're clever you really can use it to work out strategies to beat the opposition. Cue thousands of shooting fans trying desperately to sound like generals, with liberal use of phrases like "you go on point", "I'm hot" and "enemy at six o'clock, I've got you covered". It turns what was a fairly clinical shooter into something out of *Platoon*,

with jokes, insights and insults being traded between rounds of gunfire.

Those who've played the first *SOCOM* will be eager to find out what the difference between this and the original is. Weeeeelll, the changes are subtle, but they do go a long way to making *SOCOM II* such a blast online. You can now chat to everyone before a game and, even more importantly, you get to see who's speaking, meaning you're no longer lost in a fog of random voices. And the rocket launcher, while slow to use, adds a much-needed dose of sheer stupid violence to the whole thing. Minor additions, yes, but essential rather than just cosmetic. One thing's for sure – you won't be going back to the original after playing this.



HIDE-AND-SNEAK Play from a SEAL's eye view, or see your man in front of you like this.



NOT EASY BEING GREEN Night vision is often a necessity.

PUTTING IT ON THE LINE | IS *SOCOM II* WORTH GOING ONLINE FOR?

>> THE PROS >>

>NET CHAT

Actually hear what your team are saying. Gaming will never be the same now that you can order 'your boys' around via a USB headset. It genuinely works, too. Although with the language we've heard, it's a dubious honour.

>GET A CLAN

SOCOM II lets you choose friends, find out if they're online and then form a clan to bust terrorist ass together. It may sound daunting, but it's a fantastic team experience.

>FILTH

Get online and a whole new world of sickening porn appears. Peer-to-peer filesharing means you can even 'borrow' it from other people's hard drives. You're definitely going to hell now.

>> THE CONS >>

>YOU'LL BECOME SAD

Suddenly, trivial things like eating and sleeping are thrown over for 'just one more kill'. You get dumped by your internet-hating girlie and end up having cybersex with the girl with the suspiciously husky voice. Brr.

>YOU NEED A MODEM AND ADAPTOR

Because you can't go online without them. The PS2 ethernet adaptor will set you back about \$70. It's at this point that the draw of *Pro Evo 3* can be too great to actually leave the couch.

>\$70-PLUS A MONTH

For the broadband connection. That's a lot of money just to replace *SOCOM II*'s clever artificial intelligence with the minds of inbred gaming hillbillies. Just remember the porn...



CLOSE UP AND PERSONAL A bullet through the skull will put him out of action for good.



Spending \$100 on a game is no small beans for most of us, so when it comes to getting broadband for games, the \$70 a month can look positively insulting. Especially when you could write the list of decent online titles on a gnat's armpit. *SOCOM II* is the new king of internet shooters, no doubt, but you'd be wise to check our Putting It On The Line box for more details over whether it's truly worth your wad.

Those accustomed to playing their shooters on a big beige box may find that the PS2 experience is a far less subtle one, thanks to the controller replacing the mouse and keyboard. Far from detracting from the online game as a whole, it means that firefights are ever so slightly fairer, with even decent players running and strafing

"\$70 A MONTH FOR BROADBAND CAN LOOK INSULTING WHEN YOU CAN WRITE THE LIST OF DECENT ONLINE TITLES ON A GNAT'S ARMPIT."

next to opponents rather than taking them out in a second from half the map away. That's not to say you can't get very accurate shots in, however. It's just that you'll probably find yourself surviving a few more encounters than you would if you casually dropped into a hardcore PC online shooter.

SEAL YOUR FATE

The attention to detail which marked out the first game is still here in force, with every character and weapon looking crisp and detailed. So it's a bit of a mystery why *SOCOM II* has even nearby buildings looming out of an impenetrable mist. According to the game, the average Navy Seal can only see approximately 100 feet ahead. Everything beyond that dissolves into a beige mist. We can only recommend Specsavers for this team of myopic loons, unless the people who made the game just aren't very good at getting the PS2 to draw far into the distance. We think the designers should go back to developing school, and not sleep through all those boring texture mapping classes this time. It's vaguely

understandable in online gaming, although not really forgivable. But there's simply no excuse in the single-player game.

So there you have it. *SOCOM II*'s a great title, but it's hardly a whole new world. If you hunger for more of the same from the first game, with a few graphical tweaks and better online play, you'll be sorted. And we strongly suggest you try playing online if you can, because it's definitely the future. One day, all games will be made this way, sleep will be abolished in exchange for all-night deathmatches, and our eyes will turn into giant static-filled television screens. We can feel it happening now. And we kind of like it.

/ JOFF BROWN



WE ARE FAMILY Look after your team and they'll help you out.

PS2 VERDICT

>UPPERS

- > Online shooting's fun
- > In-depth missions
- > Better artificial intelligence
- > Deep tactical action

>DOWNERS

- > Offline's only OK
- > No in-mission save points
- > Dodgy looks
- > Only slight improvement

GRAPHICS > Why can't we see? Do we have cataracts?

7

SOUNDS > Mix of in-ear commands and great FX

8

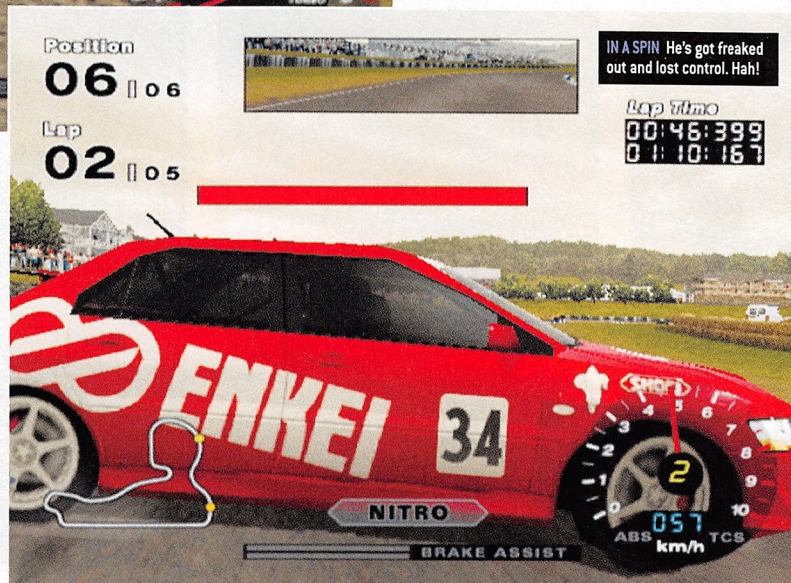
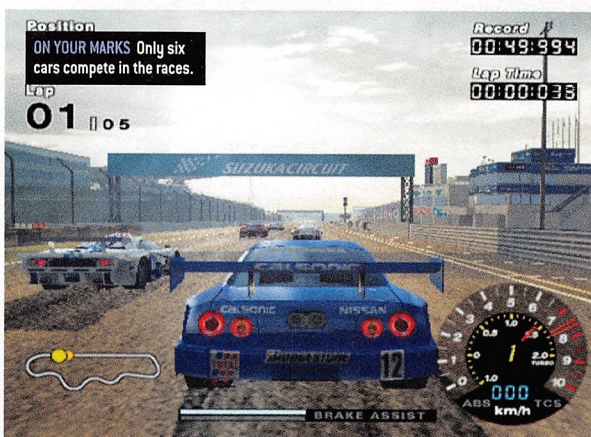
GAMEPLAY > Lone players will snore, onlineers will love it.

8

OVERALL SCORE

A refinement rather than a true sequel, *SOCOM II* will impress those with an online adaptor and leave the rest of us feeling slightly short-changed. Still the best online experience though.

8



R: RACING

RIDGE RACER HAS BEEN REINVENTED AS R: RACING. BUT DOES IT DELIVER WARP SPEED RACING ON A KNIFE-EDGE OR JUST A STEAM-POWERED TRACTOR DASH IN THE MUD?

> TYPE	RACING
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	MARCH
> PUBLISHER	EA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	NAMCO
> ONLINE	NO

R: RACING IS A BIT LIKE ONE OF THOSE

premium-rate internet webcam girls, just not a particularly good-looking one. Viewed from a distance *R: Racing* teases you mercilessly, leaving you with tenting trousers and a throbbing red gear-stick. "Forget that *Grand Turismo* bitch," she purrs into your ear, all legs and eyelashes, "follow me round the back of the garage for a hot,

one-on-one tuning session." Suitably seduced, you hand over your credit card, but what do you actually get in return? She's promised to show you the rosy pink cheeks of hardcore racing, but then wimps out with a quick knicker-flash of insipid arcade action. Hmm. Perhaps we'll keep our pants on for this one after all. Here's why.

The original *Ridge Racer* games were all about

mad yet embarrassingly simple arcade racing. But *R: Racer* has dropped the cheese and gone for a marginally more grown-up approach. It isn't a completely serious simulation, but it's still lost a lot of the arcade flashiness we used to love. The motor moguls behind *R: Racing* are well aware of the dangerously schizoid nature of their product, and so they've thoughtfully given you two ways to drive. You can play in an arcade way, which might have you yawning before long, or you can take it to the limit with a much more rigorous and simulation-like driving system.



DRIVE HIM CRAZY The yellow bar means you're getting to him.



IT TAKES TWO But there ain't that many options in multiplayer.

BRAKE FOR THE BORDER

The easy way is to leave on the default brake assist option. With brake assist enabled, a mere wisp of breath on to the Square button from halfway across the room will bring your speedster to a screeching standstill in milliseconds. Brake assist gives you a shiny gold ticket to enter corners at top speed, leaving your

They're implants, before you ask.

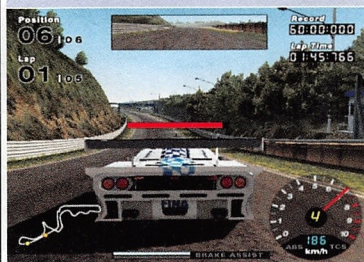


RENA'S GUIDE TO PSYCHING OUT.

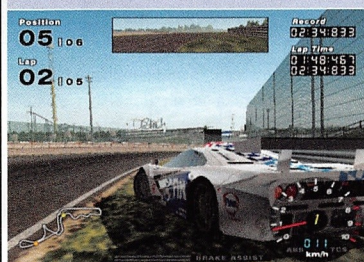
WE REVEAL HER METHODS FOR PUTTING THOSE RIVAL DRIVERS IN A SPIN.



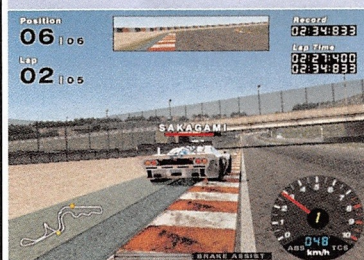
First, spot your victim. This fella looks like he needs some excitement in his life. Plus, he's just ahead of us. Let's screw with his mind.



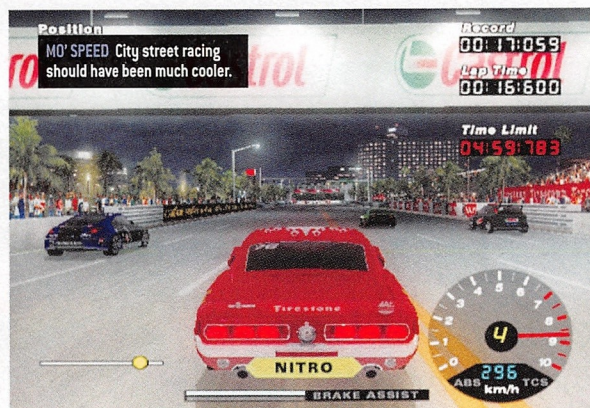
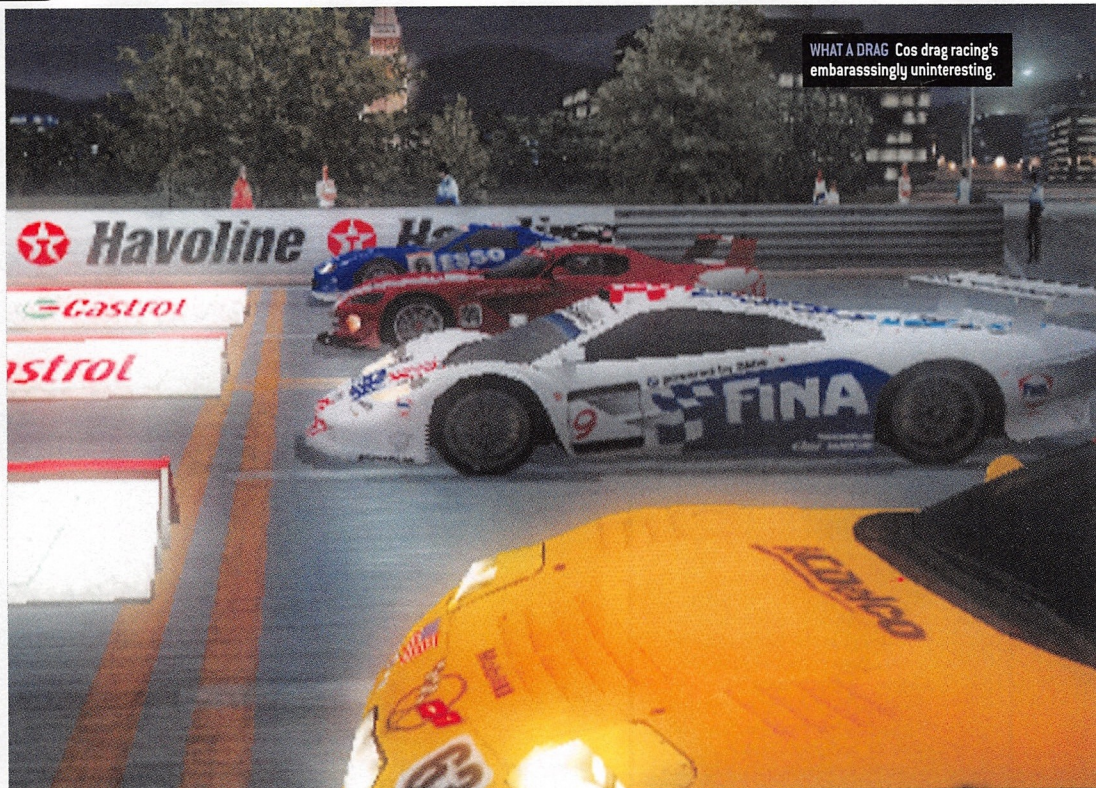
Stay just behind him and weave around like you're about to overtake. It'll drive him mental. The red bar tells you just how mental he is.



Bish bosh! He's become so distracted he's forgotten how to drive, just like in real life. That crash should put him out of action for a bit.



Now he's so messed up he keeps making schoolboy errors all the time. Sure, you could just pass him, but where's the fun in that?



"BRAKE ASSIST GIVES YOU A SHINY GOLD TICKET TO ENTER CORNERS AT TOP SPEED, LEAVING YOUR BRAKING TO THE VERY LAST SECOND."

braking until the very last second, and also helps to avoid all those embarrassing tussles with the gravel that occur when you mess up in, you know, real racing games. Put yourself into the car's-eye view and you might as well be a tiny ghost wafting mournfully around the track for all the sense of reckless speed you get. Like some kind of PG-rated, Disney version of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, losing the sweat and terror means losing the thrills. You'll be in the middle of a race, you'll check your lap meter and it'll be the last circuit before you even notice you're playing.

Brake assist is how the game thinks you want to play it. Trust us, you don't. You need to go cold turkey, switch it off and take control of your own destiny like the man, woman or precocious teenager that you are. Switch it off and you'll be flying round corners, smacking into barriers and generally making the mistakes you make in real driving games. Better already.

Once you've got the handling sorted, you'll



need to concentrate on winning a race or two. Luckily, *R:Racer* gives you the ability to mess with other drivers' heads by hanging around behind them until it drives them potty and they crash. This is represented by a bar above their car. Stay behind them long enough and it'll fill up and turn red, triggering an unconvincing crash at the next corner or, occasionally, mess up on the simplest straight. It's fun and Japanese, but not really as much fun as just, well, taking a better line and passing them on your own.

To tie in with the idea that the people in the opposing cars aren't just robots, you're surrounded with their chatter, plus the advice of your pits-bound svengali. This overload of aural gabber is both a bonus and a bore. "Go round this bend," says your instructor unhelpfully. "Now go round the next one," he adds. Should you lose, he's got even more sterling advice: "Next time, shoot for victory!" Sometimes you'll end up shouting back "Don't question my judgement you fat shit!" at the screen like a man

Gizza job.

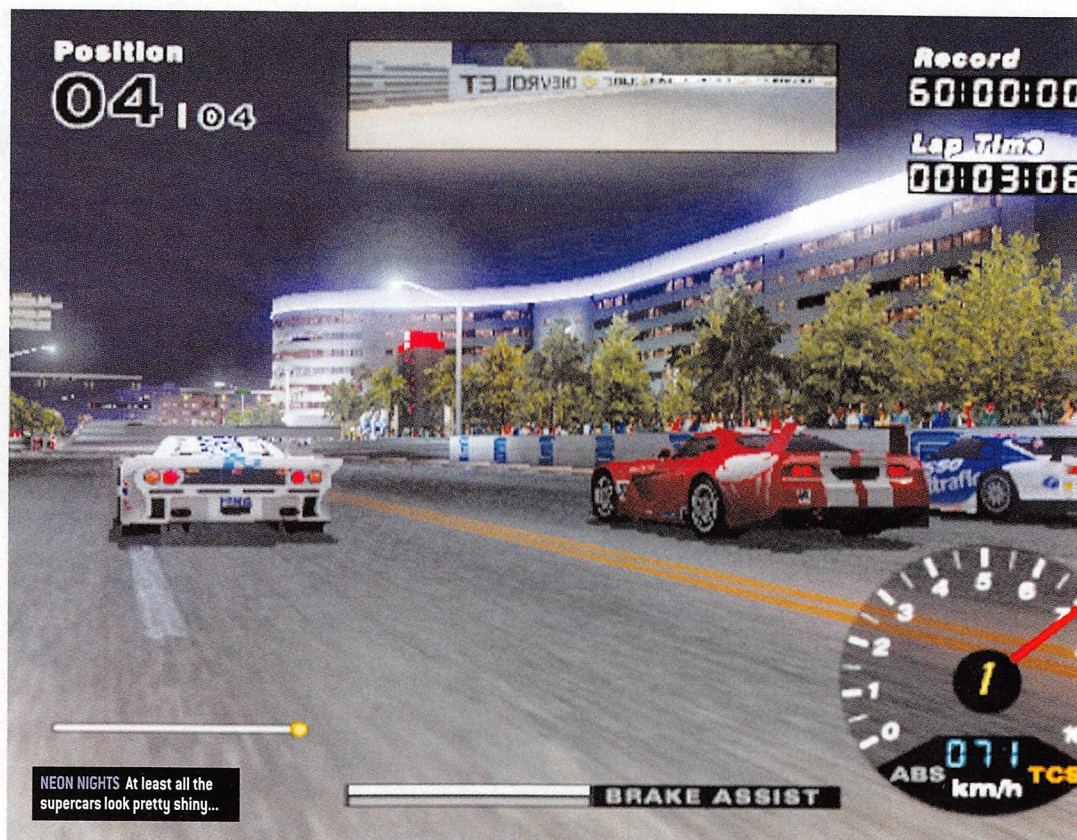


EAT MY DUST!

RALLYING IN *R: RACING* WON'T BE GIVING OUR COLIN ANY SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

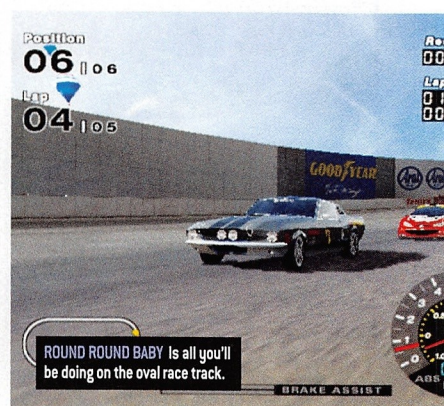
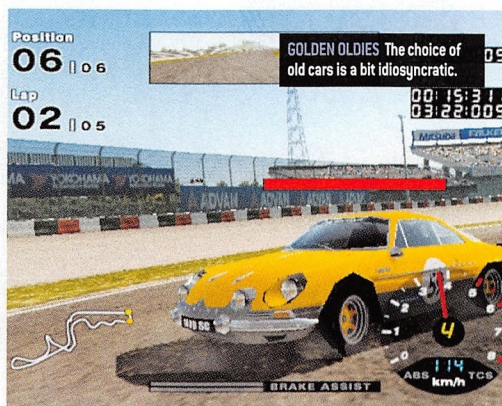


Rallying in *R: Racing* will take up a fair amount of your playing time, but don't expect anything on the level of *Colin McRae 04* or *WRC 3*. Thanks to muddy car handling, fairly dull courses and a lack of serious simulation options like damage, proper tuning and real tracks, the rally element isn't anywhere near that of its specialist peers. But there is one positive side about the rallying: powerslides. Powerslides by the metric ton. Take any corner at the right angle, brake for a millisecond and then power round, kicking up more dust than El Nino. Nicier than a bowl of kittens.



NEON NIGHTS At least all the supercars look pretty shiny...

BRAKE ASSIST



out of touch with all reality. But having other drivers shout at you as you cut them up, or as they cruise past you does add a dash of much-needed depth to the game. "Kiss my ass!" or "It can't be!" give you some faintly evil pride. Try rallying, and your co-driver delivers the pace notes with the oddest pseudo-Kiwi/Dick Van Dyke cockney accent you've ever heard, which is momentarily amusing.

HORSES FOR COURSES

R: Racing boasts 14 tracks. Some of these are from real life, supplemented by others that exist



THE OPEN ROAD You'll often get easily ahead of the pack.

only in the minds of the development team. But where even the PSone *Ridge Racers* featured stunning scenery and improbable courses through all manner of cities, temples and forests, *R: Racing* has chosen a more sedate style. The most exciting it gets is when you rally through a desert course, or spot windmills turning slowly as you execute another powerslide. You'll look in vain for the kind of surreal tracks that used to pop up in the *Ridge Racers* of old. There's one half-hearted attempt at a semi-traditional *Ridge Racer* course through a city, but it's as dull as un buttered bread. The

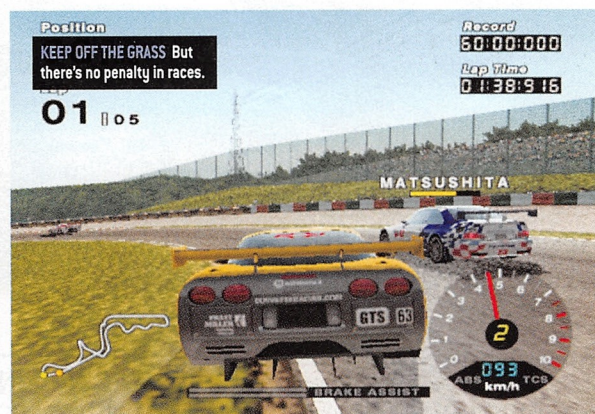
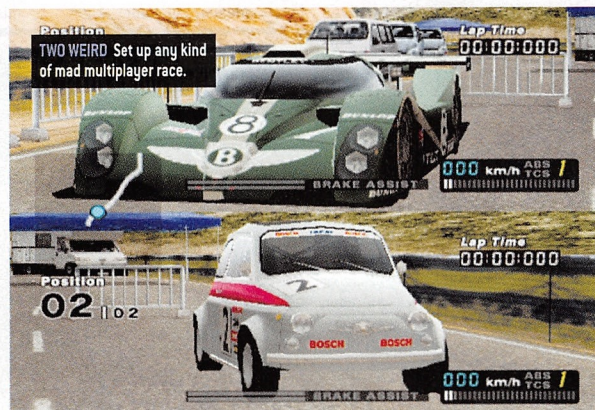


DREAM RACE 600hp supercar vs Italian tin can? Yes sir!

big nod to racing realism and credibility here is the Japanese Suzuka circuit. Rubbish, we say. Having a racing game featuring Suzuka is about as original as a balding man being hit in the balls by his young child on *Funniest Home Videos*.

And yet *R: Racing* still parades its arcade heritage in a million different ways. In Rally mode, just like everywhere else, even the flimsiest of plastic barriers are impossible to breach. End up facing the wrong way after a crash and you'll be turned back the right way, as if by a giant robot hand. And no matter how many times you hit another car, you won't do even the smallest dent of chassis damage or hurt your performance in the slightest. Just like *Gran Turismo*, to be fair. What seems less fair is that, although you can spook the opposition by driving close behind, ramming into them like a madman will have no effect on them at all.

Everything has a shiny, slightly laminated look to it, like it's the final scene in a Mr. Sheen commercial, but aside from a lack of interesting trackside detail it's otherwise commendably pretty. The cars themselves look perfectly turned out in the garage, with enough gleaming, reflective paintwork and fine detailing to give



“END UP FACING THE WRONG WAY AFTER A CRASH AND YOU’LL BE TURNED BACK THE RIGHT WAY, AS IF BY A GIANT ROBOT HAND.”

Max Walker a hard on. But when you haul them out onto the track to give them a try-out, you notice right away that something's different. At some point before you get to drive them, the cars get hit with the ugly stick so hard they never recover. Smooth curves are replaced with angular extrusions. Reflections are dimmed, detail is painted over with blunt crayon and everything else just feels like it's all been moved a couple of notches down from the supermodels you saw in the showroom. They're not bad-looking, these cars, not bad at all really, but the stakes are so super-high in the looks department these days that if they're not straight out of a glossy car porn mag then we aren't buying.

STOP. TALKING. ABOUT. THE BOOBS.

Oh, and there's some girls. Girl drivers. Girl drivers with big breasts. Naturally. And the

game's so keen on you noticing them, it barely lets a cut-scene pass without the camera panning past their eerily huge leather-encased flesh-globes. You can even tell which driver is good and which is evil simply by looking at their cleavage. We're not kidding. Rena's funbags are pert, perky and overly enthusiastic – just like her. Gena's norks, on the other hand, enter the room long before she does, straining to break free from their repressive bonds, every bit as pushy and overbearing as she is. We're sorry to go on about tits in a review of a driving game, but to be honest it's been forced on us by developer Namco's vain attempt to distract us away from the dodgy driving. Not that the boobs themselves ever actually see the light of day, of course, being just metaphors for the intensity of the competition between the two girls. Ultimately, it's all about as thrilling as a made-for-television movie about girl prisons with all the dirty bits cunningly removed. If you actually find any of it even slightly arousing, you're either rather young and very lonely, or you haven't fully explored the internet yet.

The story behind all this heaving flesh is that Rena, a hot Japanese ambulance driver, is

thrust provocatively into a world of racing, intrigue and tight leather, only to clash with Gina, the dominatrix queen of fast car competition. That's it, really. There were some men in there too but we didn't really notice what they were doing. And the story, such as it is, doesn't make a shred of difference to what you have to do, apart from at one stage you're asked to come second in a race rather than first. Mildly diverting, perhaps. For all of three minutes.

The tracks you need to complete are a grab bag of straight racing, rallying and drag racing. We're not sure who decided to put drag racing in the game, but whoever they are, we hope they're currently in some kind of a deep, dark and stinking pit. Because of all the stupidest, most meaningless race modes, *R: Racing's* drag challenges really take the piss-stained trophy. We can understand it in, ahem, must stop mentioning it, the *Gran Turismo* games, because they purposely set out to cover all angles of racing. But here, when we only have a baby's handful of tracks to play on, it means two of them are taken up for drag racing. These two tracks are neon-lit cityscapes just ripe for the ripping up, reminding us of both *The Fast and*

CHECK OUT MY PURPLE VIPER!

DID SOMEONE ORDER A JOB LOT OF VERY RANDOM CARS TO THE R: RACING BACKLOT?



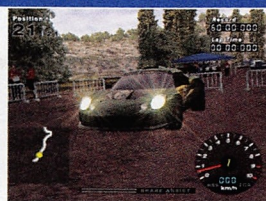
SHELBY GT 500

Your classic US muscle car came for the drag racing, but it's accessible in arcade mode to provide a bit of down-home glamour for the other courses too.



FIAT 500

Eh? This Italian teenie must have got lost on the way to the scrapyard. It's here representing the small selection of 'classic' Euro models in the game.



LOTUS ELISE

A sportier version of the ever-popular poseur's friend, the Elise is the vehicular equivalent of no-strings sex with your best mate's missus. Naughty!



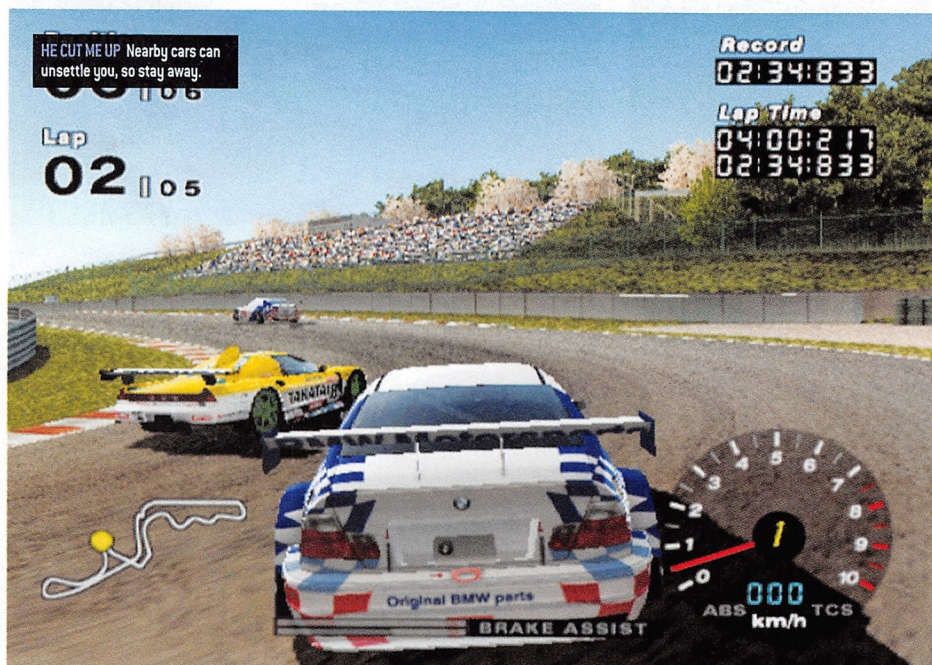
CALSONIC SKYLINE

No racing game is complete without a version of the car that many good men and women would gladly give a random limb to own. Feel its majesty.



DODGE VIPER

A purple Dodge Viper. We're sorry to have to subject your eyes to such indignity. It's like covering the Mona Lisa with vomit. Only somehow much, much worse.



the *Furious* and *Need for Speed Underground*, which is all good, homey. The only fly in the soup is that both these street-smart, hard-driving tracks are straight lines of, ooh, about 200 metres long. And that's it. Hardly what you paid your money for, considering the races just consist of pressing accelerate at the right time and using your nitro to speed past the three other cars. Yes, we know that's what drag racing is, but it doesn't mean we have to enjoy it.

DRIVING US MAD

So you may well be wondering, after all this groaning, what we actually do like about *R: Racing*. Hmm, let's see. For a start, for all our carping about car model quality, the gas guzzling super-wagons still look better than 90% of cars in the other racing pretenders out there. In truth we'd probably be singing *R: Racing*'s visual praises if a certain other racing series wasn't preparing to unleash the best driving experience ever upon us. The admirable split-screen two-player mode looks just as sharp as when you're playing on your own, and gives you a much-needed chance to experience the rally courses with more than one car in the mix. Um, what else? How about when you go over cattle grids and the pad shakes just like you would in real life. That's quite good too. We actually quite like the idea of being able to freak out computer-controlled cars too. It's a decent concept, so we'll

"R: RACING ISN'T A COMPLETE DISASTER – IT'S JUST A MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO PUT THE SERIES IN THE BIG LEAGUE."

pat *R: Racing* patronisingly on the head for coming up with it, or at least copying it from last year's *Total Immersion Racing*. *R: Racing* isn't a complete disaster – it's just a missed opportunity to put the series in the big league. And that's it, really.

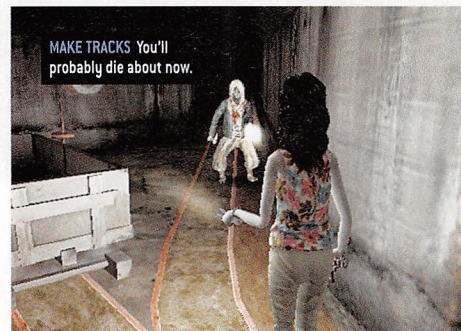
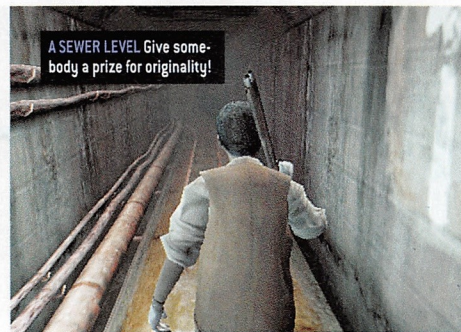
So the sad truth is that *R: Racing* isn't worthy of licking *Gran Turismo 3*'s leather uppers, let alone *Gran Turismo 4*'s latex stilettos. The point we're trying to make here is that it's not much fun. *Pas beaucoup d'amusement. No mucha diversión. Nicht viel spass. Cobblers*, if you will. It's not often that a big, important games maker like Namco cuts corners in this fashion, but then the *Ridge Racer* games have always been about style over substance. Like a supermodel talking about astrophysics, we were always bound to spot how stupid the series was, just as soon as it tried to act all clever. So we've gone and got nostalgic for the sunny stupidity of the old *Ridge Racer* games now. Not, however, to the extent of actually getting them out of the cupboard and playing them. Either we're shockingly lazy, or the whole series has just lost its last vestige of fragile charm. Perhaps both.

It's unfortunate that *R: Racing* has popped up just before the almighty *Gran Turismo 4*. It's painful to compare the two games side by side, but it seems to be what Namco wants. You can't help but judge it by some of *Gran Turismo*'s standards. And with less cars, less tracks, but crucially none of the perfect looks and handling the Sony series is famous for, there's no doubt which is the winner. There's a lot here to enjoy if you can see past the comparisons, but if you can you're far better people than we are. A *Gran Turismo* motor has quality written all the way through it like God's favourite stick of rock. But if you read the number-plates on these cars, we're fairly certain they'll spell "NOT 4LL TH4T".

/ JOFF BROWN

PSW VERDICT

> UPBERS		> DOWNERS	
> Easy to play		> 35 cars?	
> Freak out other drivers		> 14 tracks?	
> Looks kinda purdy		> Is that all?	
> Big-breasted ladies		> That's rubbish	
GRAPHICS > Superficial sheen disguises mundane looks			7
SOUNDS > Cars sound bad, but shouty drivers are fun			6
GAMEPLAY > Can't approach the majesty of <i>Gran Turismo</i>			6
OVERALL SCORE <i>R: Racing</i> does nothing new, yet gets rid of most of what was fun about the <i>Ridge Racer</i> series. So despite being fairly playable, it hardly ignites our trousers like <i>Gran Turismo 4</i> does.			6



FORBIDDEN SIREN

SONY'S SURVIVAL HORROR LETS YOU LOOK LIKE A ZOMBIE. NO, NOT LIKE THAT.

> TYPE	SURVIVAL HORROR
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	MARCH
> PUBLISHER	SONY
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	SONY
> ONLINE	NO

ZOMBIES ARE NOT HUGELY SCARY. ADMITTEDLY, if you woke up tied to one in a dingy, that might be scary. If it was just you and a hundred thousand zombies having a massive fight in a big pit, that might also be quite scary. Still, the idea of a really slow moving enemy that may well fall apart before it manages to reach us fails to instil the same sort of fear as say, touching a really big spider or fighting a lion.

Forbidden Siren is set in Hanyuda – a fictional Japanese village where some kind of hideous terror has turned all but ten of the locals into the undead. The narrative is split between these ten characters with episodes jumping back and forth in time. This non-linear plot device turns the

otherwise traditional story into something far more interesting.

The gameplay also provides a different take on the standard. Your character is usually unarmed and is often required to escort a second character around the level. To make up for these disadvantages, you have the ability to Sightjack – a psychic power that allows you to look through the eyes of the various zombies. This lets you plan your route to the exit by timing dashes from one safe spot to the next, a dynamic more reminiscent of stealth games than survival horror games. Later into the game, weapons start to feature more heavily but ammunition is scarce and a fair amount of planning is still required.

Graphically, *Forbidden Siren* really shines – in the sense of being extremely gloomy and not at all shiny. Darkness is used very effectively; during the night you will come to rely on your torchlight to sneak about in the shadows.

Sadly, the voice dubbing – which has held up the PAL release – is of the worst possible kind. Where the original Japanese dialogue with subtitles would have kept the horror film feel, the badly acted, badly integrated mockney rubbish smeared over the top of the original voiceover adds more comedy appeal than terror.

Still, this is one of the most intelligent takes on the basic rules of survival horror that we've

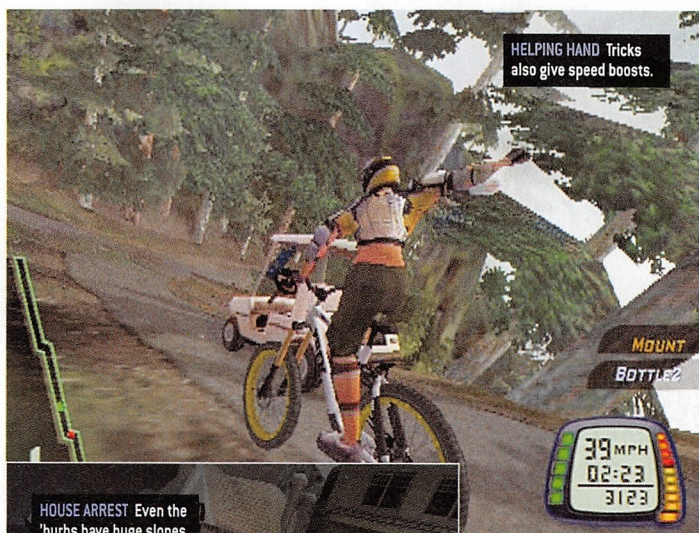
come across. Whether it's a good game though is another matter. It requires a strictly methodical approach that's always concerned with timing rather than action. Actions being accessed through a menu system rather than assigned to buttons serves to further reinforce this slow thoughtful pace and this is the game's greatest advantage... and greatest flaw. If you're happy to accept the pace the game forces on you, then this will provide a satisfying and meaty challenge. Those looking for a more bombastic adventure will probably find its sedate nature less appealing than similar titles.

/ MARK SORRELL



TAKE A BOW In Japan, even the zombies are ultra-polite.

PSW VERDICT					
<div>> UPPERS</div> <div>> Fairly original</div> <div>> Graphically impressive</div> <div>> Great atmosphere</div> <div>> Clever plotting</div>			<div>> DOWNERS</div> <div>> Very slow pace</div> <div>> Stop/start gameplay</div> <div>> Slightly clunky controls</div> <div>> Terrible dubbing</div>		
GRAPHICS > Strong looks and well designed locations			8		
SOUNDS > Awful, awful dubbing. Like, really bad			3		
GAMEPLAY > Slow but unique take on the horror genre			6		
OVERALL SCORE					
It's a brave attempt to do something new and it almost works. Sadly, the pacing is just too slow for any but the most dedicated and methodical to get any real enjoyment out of this.					
					6



> TYPE	RACING
> PLAYERS	1-4
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	CODEMASTERS
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	INCOG INC.
> ONLINE	NO

DOWNHILL DOMINATION

PEDAL DOWN A MOUNTAIN AS FAST AS POSSIBLE. YES, THAT'S ABOUT AS COMPLEX AS THIS GAME GETS. AND IT'S UTTERLY FANTASTIC.

YOU DON'T NEED US TO TELL YOU THAT THIS issue is stuffed with stealth games. Games in which a team of calloused, world-weary soldiers peek around corridors only to get shot to pieces by omniscient guards, meaning you have to restart the level for the 103rd time. Don't get us wrong, some of these games are good. Some are so good that if they were girls we'd be in a drowsy post-coital snuggle with them right now. But we don't remember signing the waiver that said 'We'd like all games to be set in the worst bits of Serbia and with colour schemes that are mainly brown and grey.'

So when *Downhill Domination* tap-danced onto our desk, giggling like a drunk Japanese schoolgirl and showing its knickers to passers-by, we were a bit taken aback. Surely, we thought, this must be some new twist on the stealth genre. An SAS spy and his gadget-laden BMX, hiding from evil bike terrorists as he tries to rescue his wheelchair-bound boss? A team of highly trained special agents cycling through a post-apocalyptic no-man's land, maybe? Nope. It's a game where you bike really fast down a

really big mountain and try not to fall over. In today's gritty, sneak-based climate, that's nothing short of genius.

ROCKS AND A HARD PLACE

After choosing a country-themed fictional biker, you're catapulted straight into a race down a maze-like mountain with a bunch of other garrulous gearheads. And what a mountain. Don't be expecting any flat surfaces. What isn't rock is caverns. What isn't caverns is twisting dirt

tracks. What isn't twisting dirt tracks is rope bridges, tree-topped slopes and mooses. Yes, mooses, because one of *Downhill Domination's* sillier gameplay concepts is the addition of moving obstacles in the form of wild animals that you can knock over – if they're small enough. Anything bigger than a fox, and you'll be brought to a standstill, cursing as you lose a few precious seconds thanks to the furry bastard that got in your way.

The first level, like all the levels that come after it, is big. Like, very big. If you laid them end to end, they'd probably stretch to Venus, although we haven't measured because we're on a fairly tight deadline. Better than big, they're intensely varied. Start at the top of a rocky slope and you might well find yourself coasting through a wooden village, an industrial park, a medieval castle or over the roofs of huge observatories. Mountains take tens of minutes to traverse, and you'll rarely find yourself getting bored with the ever-changing scenery. Stray too far from the track, and you'll occasionally get reset back onto the course, but most of the time you're able to



LEG PLANT Recover control or a meeting with that tree is likely.

ON YER BIKE!

IF YOU THINK THE HUMBLE PEDAL BIKE CAN'T BE USED FOR STUNTIFICATION, YOU'RE VERY WRONG.



#1

The simple wheelie is still one of the finest tricks ever invented. Perform it with pride.



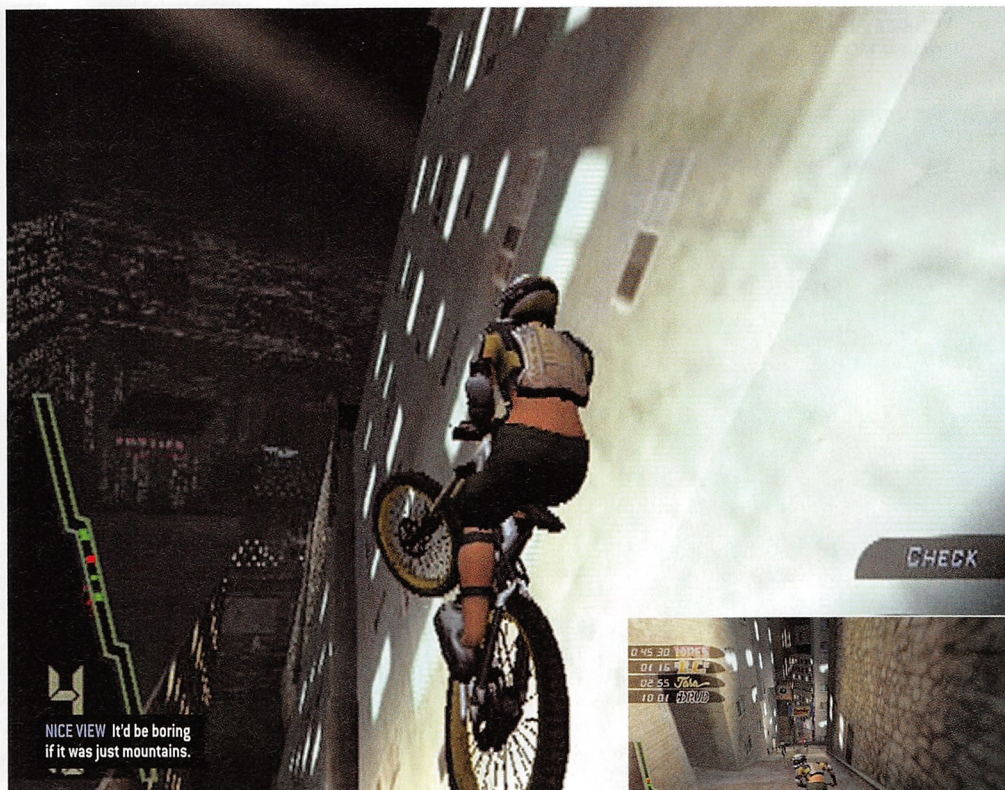
#2

It wouldn't be an extreme sports game without big air tricks. Hence this sort of thing.



#3

Every stunt gives you a speed boost, so keep on tricking till you cross the line.



NICE VIEW It'd be boring if it was just mountains.



DIRT ROAD Off-track might be the quick route.



BOTTLE IT If you can't beat them, try more underhand tactics.



PEDAL POWER Bonuses include a quick remount after crashing.

"BIKE REALLY FAST DOWN A MOUNTAIN AND TRY NOT TO FALL OVER. IN TODAY'S GRITTY, SNEAK-BASED CLIMATE, THAT'S GENIUS."

leap over twists in the track and find the most vertical way down to beat your frantically pedalling opponents. Best of all, power-ups are liberally scattered about, and if you hit a red boost icon you'll be sent hurtling at comedy speeds far down the course. Pulling off tricks earns you more speed boosts too, so if you're doing well you'll cover the rocky terrain in half the time.

Downhill Domination is all the more impressive for doing the whole rather lame-sounding pedal bike thing in a world obsessed by motorised mayhem. This is actually a very astute choice. Because for some reason, every motorbike game ever released on PlayStation2 has been unremittingly yawnsome. Even the mighty Electronic Arts didn't really nail it with *Freekstyle*, which we expect you've already forgotten. It's been a while since a game has given us calloused thumbs, but *Downhill Domination* has knackered our digits thanks to its insistence on holding down the X button in time-honoured style. And no matter how many times we're told, we simply won't believe that holding it down harder won't make us go faster.

After all, these are analogue buttons, so it might work, right?

SHE'LL BE COMING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

Whew. We're getting worn out just describing all this action. *Downhill Domination* is quite a ride, and while it's not got the immersive snow world of *SSX3* to back it up, it's almost equally as exciting in its headlong dashes to the bottom of giant slopes. Quite why Sony passed up on publishing this is beyond us when it brings out inferior rubbish like *Destruction Derby Arenas*.



WORK SHY Hitting people and animals brings you to a stop.

The thing is, games as simple and direct as this are usually only attempted by idiots whose brains can't comprehend anything even slightly more complex. And so they're usually crap. *Downhill Domination*, on the other hand, has been lovingly formed by the eggheads behind *Twisted Metal: Black* and *War of the Monsters*. Not the sexiest games in the world, maybe, but fairly well put together. And now they've got the gameplay just right too. So we salute developer Incog Inc. for having the courage to make a game that goes for the fun jugular. And now if you'll excuse us, we'll go back to trying to slit that Russian guard's throat armed with just a paper knife again. Sigh...

/ JOFF BROWN

PSW VERDICT

UPPERS	DOWNERS
> Slick levels	> Stunts aren't great
> Great colours	> You can't ride everywhere
> Full of life	> Can be too twitchy
> Fast as f**k	> Riders are annoying

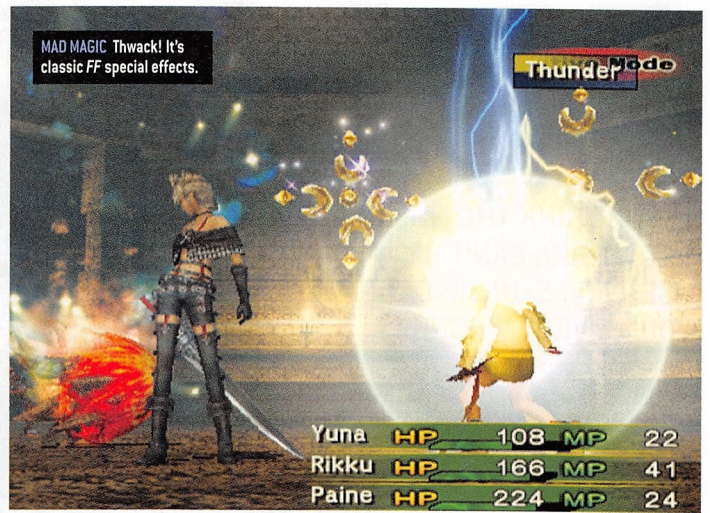
GRAPHICS > Fast-moving but scrappy around the edges **7**

SOUNDS > Crap US metal and catchphrasing throughout **6**

GAMEPLAY > Pedal. Fall down a ravine. Pedal faster. Ace **9**

OVERALL SCORE
Despite lacking a full complement of brains, *Downhill Domination* has the gameplay charm and slightly tarty looks to get our pecker up. If only more games were this fun.

9



FINAL FANTASY X-2

POP MUSIC, GIGGLING GIRLS AND SHORT SKIRTS? IN A FINAL FANTASY GAME? IF *FINAL FANTASY X* WAS THE POO SCUD, X-2 LOOKS MORE LIKE OUR DELTA.



> TYPE	ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	MARCH
> PUBLISHER	EA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	SQUARE
> ONLINE	NO

FINAL FANTASY X-2 ISN'T SO MUCH A

sequel as a spin-off. Think *Buffy* to *Angel*, *Scooby* to *Scrappy*. Think, if you really must, of *Saved By the Bell* to *Saved By the Bell: The New Class*. If, however, you've never played *Final Fantasy X*, then allow us to stand back, suck air through our teeth, stroke our chins and suggest that you're probably in the wrong place. You see, *Final Fantasy X-2* was never really designed for the likes of you. It's for hardcore *Final Fantasy X* fans in need of another fix. It's set two years on from *Final Fantasy X* and picks up the story from where it ended. As such, it's the first *Final Fantasy* game that doesn't have to completely reinvent itself from scratch with a new world. But although it continues the timeline, it's not really a direct sequel, but rather the slightly zany, rather crazy, adventures of girly characters Yuna and Rikku from the first game. Which is a bit odd, to say the least. But not necessarily in a bad way.

YOU GO, GIRL

As far as gameplay goes (and even avid fans of

the series know that's not very far) not a lot has changed. You explore new areas to complete quests, all the while being interrupted with random, unavoidable monster encounters that take the form of turn-based battles. In normal human-speak this means that you decide on an action for each of your characters, which consists mostly of hitting the opposition, perhaps with a bit of spell casting or health-potion drinking thrown in. After you've done, the enemies take their turn to do the same, and so it continues until someone dies. Although it sounds like it should be about as exciting as watching two old men take turns slapping each other around the face with a smoked kipper, it's injected with a bit more urgency in *Final Fantasy X-2* because the battles mostly take place in live time. You only have a few seconds to decide what to do before the monsters wade in and, by being quick with your commands, your character will be able to pack in more hits before the enemy takes his turn. It's still a far cry from the straight-up action games we know and love, but it's made

up for by the excellent design of the creatures and unashamedly over-the-top special effects.

Instead of levelling up with the troublesome Sphere thingamajigs, as in *Final Fantasy X*, characters in *X-2* simply increase in power by gaining experience. That said, it wouldn't be a *Final Fantasy* game without some amazingly strange way of progressing, and this time it's called Dresspheres. Imagine a system that made you better at fighting, or healing, or even pouting. Now imagine that it let you change your skills mid-battle. And finally, imagine it all happened through the universally tried-and-tested girly method of changing outfits. That's Dresspheres for you. With it, the girls can swap their powers at the same time as their tops, while the boys can gawp at their cutesy and ever so slightly pervy ensembles. Girl players are happy, boy players are happy. Everybody's happy. Oh, and in keeping with the slightly lightweight feel of the whole thing, you're now limited to only three characters fighting at any one time. So even slightly stupid people will be happy. Marvellous.



CASE OF CRABS Where's the ointment when you need it, eh?



BIRDS VS BIRDS Being attacked by shining owls – normal here.



ANATOMY OF A GIRL-FIGHT

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU COMBAT NASTIES IN FINAL FANTASY X-2.

- 1 The Big Bad. El Monstro. The thing you have to hit. In this case something that looks vaguely like a Triffid with an eating disorder.
- 2 Meanwhile Rikku powers up in readiness for her next attack, which leaves her vulnerable to more strikes from Audrey II here.
- 3 Yuna's dressed up as a warrior to improve her sword skills. And show off that ass! To change costumes and powers mid-fight, just hit L1.
- 4 Choose from your selection of moves, but do it quick because you're being timed now, and the battle won't stop for you to think things through.
- 5 These bars fill up continually. When they're full, it's your round. Wait for two or three girls to be ready at the same time to pull off chain attacks.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

In a nod to sanity, the whole fantasy world of Spira is opened up to you from the start, allowing you to jet off in your fancy airship to any location you choose. Veterans of previous *Final Fantasy* games will know just how rare this is. Usually you've got ten hours of gameplay to wade through before you get the run of the map, but there's a simple reason for your freedom here. As you're still in *Final Fantasy X*'s game world, you'll be visiting a fair few of the same locations as in the previous game and nobody wants you to get bored. Although they've been tarted-up, tweaked and variously reconstructed to look newer and prettier, those returning to Yuna's world might feel justifiably short-changed by the familiarity of it all. Fortunately, perky and bright doesn't mean short. There's many tens of hours of play for the average player here, just so long as you're prepared to trawl through every single mission in order to see 100% of the game, that is.

Most importantly of all, *Final Fantasy X-2* looks as good as you've come to expect. If

"FINAL FANTASY X-2 BORROWS HEAVILY FROM THE SAME RECIPE BOOK THAT CHARLIE'S ANGELS USED."

enough world leaders were to witness it, then we reckon a single cut-scene from *Final Fantasy X-2* could be enough to bring about world peace, purely through its sheer graphical splendour. But that isn't going to force us into giving it a higher score than it really deserves. Nope. We're standing firm on this one. *Final Fantasy X-2* borrows heavily from the same recipe book that *Charlie's Angels* used – three cutesy, crime-fighting babes thrown together into a series of light-hearted action scenarios – with the result that girls in the audience get excited, while red-blooded males get slightly aroused. And that's pretty much it. Some people thought that the *Charlie's Angels* movies were a pile of brainless turdwas. Those people will be doubtless be reaching once more for such eloquent

phraseology when asked to describe *Final Fantasy X-2*. All those morally uplifting *Final Fantasy* 'death or glory' themes of before – hope in the face of adversity, epic evil countered by unyielding courage, and so on – that's all out of the window now. *X-2* is about pop music, giggling and girly camaraderie. But it still looks nice.

/ JOFF BROWN

PSW VERDICT		
> UPPERS	> DOWNERS	
> Looks splendiferous	> Endless random battles	
> Hot, yet girl-friendly, ladies	> Confusing to newbies	
> Huge and spacious	> A lot of traipsing	
> Deep and entertaining story	> Just FFX in a bikini	
GRAPHICS	> We're not just looking at the arses. Honest	9
SOUNDS	> Great voice acting and cheesy synth pop	8
GAMEPLAY	> Fights are basic and exploring is duller	6
OVERALL SCORE		
Looks good enough to charm the knickers off a convent full of nuns, but it's really nothing new in the world of adventuring and we're sure only die-hard fans will stick with it all the way.		
		7



CHOPPER CHICK You're history once Chun Li's legs start whirring with her unique spinning ick.



FEI-KICKING He's blatantly modelled on Bruce Lee.



LOW BLOW Guile's style is all about brute strength.

HYPER STREET FIGHTER 2

A PICK 'N MIX OF CHARACTERS FROM FIVE VERSIONS OF *STREET FIGHTER 2*. IT WON'T LEAVE A BITTER TASTE IF YOU'RE STILL STUCK IN THE 1990'S.



> TYPE	FIGHTING
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	MAY
> PUBLISHER	CAPCOM
> PRICE	\$79.95
> DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
> ONLINE	NO

ZILLIONS OF *STREET FIGHTER* GAMES LATER

and we get the feeling they're running out of ideas over at Capcom. After exhausting various combinations of the words 'super' and 'turbo' it looks like the task of coming up with a fresh new name has fallen to the work experience kid, hence 'hyper'. Does this mean that Ryu and company are now diabetics, or have started suffering from some form of Attention Deficit Disorder? Maybe not.

Actually, *Hyper Street Fighter 2* includes every character from the original *Street Fighter 2* game, *Championship Edition*, *Turbo*, *Super* and *Super Turbo*. This doesn't mean all five games are playable individually mind, just that the fighters, whose attacks change from title to title, are. For example, Blanka's horizontal roll attack from *Street Fighter 2* can be countered with Blanka's superior grand shave roll from *Super Turbo*. It's this mixing and matching of characters and special abilities that appeals most.

Naturally these character distinctions can throw up plenty of uneven contests when two players of the same ability choose fighters from different games. With their unique super moves *Super Turbo* characters are better than those from any other version, and are the prime choice

for any serious player. By the same token, bouts can now be evened up if the only friend you have to play against is a bit rubbish, and just mashes the controls without knowing the combos.

"I WILL MEDITATE AND THEN DESTROY YOU"

Arcade mode is exactly as you remember it, with your chosen fighter travelling the globe to fight each country's representative before facing off against one of the bosses. It's good to see all your favourite trademark moves on the roster too, from Dhalsim's elastic limbs to Ryu's 'Hado-ryuken!' cry via Chun Li's saucy knicker-flash. Each character handles and moves

according to the game version selected, and the music and sound effects are spot on too.

What's truly amazing though is how the limited 2D perspective still works. To the casual observer beat 'em ups may look like a frenzy of button bashing, but in reality it's the skilful players who always win. They're the ones who know when to keep their distance, when to move in and how to use space effectively. Back in the day this knowledge helped to settle many a playground argument about which was the best *Street Fighter* game and character.

The only disappointment is that you can't play against an Artificial Intelligence controlled



GIVE US A FLASH Oi! Move to the left a bit would you love?



LEG SWEEP Keep your distance from Dhalsim's stretchy limbs.



FAST AS LIGHTNING Get Blanka charged up for an electricity attack or horizontal ball attack.



OVERTHROWN On the deck for now, but watch out for Bison's unstoppable Psycho Crusher move.

character in Versus mode, so if you want to battle a specific character you have to either go through the Arcade mode until you reach that fighter's country (and then you only get a maximum of three rounds) or find a mate. Training mode does allow you to select any character, but since you take no damage it's pretty pointless. It smacks of lazy presentation and at best a crass oversight.

SHOW SOME GUILF

Indeed, for all those teenage rebels who once ploughed their entire weekly pocket money allowance into *Street Fighter 2* machines this supposed Anniversary Edition might feel like



TURBO POWER Original SFII characters don't stand a chance.

FIGHT AGAIN! AND AGAIN! AND AGAIN!

DOES THE WORLD NEED ANOTHER *STREET FIGHTER 2* AFTER THESE?

1991	1992	1993	1994
			
STREET FIGHTER 2	STREET FIGHTER 2: CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION	STREET FIGHTER 2 TURBO	SUPER STREET FIGHTER 2 TURBO
Eight fighters to choose from and a new two-in-one combo system that lets you combine a special attack with a regular move.	The four bosses: Balrog, Vega, Sagat and M. Bison can be played, and you can also pitch characters against themselves.	Not a massive improvement. The game speed is ramped up and new moves are added for Chun Li and M. Bison. But that's about it.	Cammy, Dee Jay, Fei Long, and T. Hawk are added to the roster, while bonus scores show how many hits are in each combo.
			Introduces the new super combo but reduces overall damage slightly. Overhead attacks and combo juggles are also added.

"BOUNTS CAN NOW BE EVENED UP IF THE ONLY FRIEND YOU HAVE TO PLAY AGAINST IS A BIT RUBBISH."

scant reward. At least here in Australia. While our friends in Asia are treated to a one hour documentary on the history of *Street Fighter 2* and a few bits of bundled merchandise, we have to settle for 1995's *Street Fighter 2: The Animated Movie*. And it's the cut version too, so there's no Chun Li shower scene and therefore little reason to watch. Anyone seriously considering *Hyper Street Fighter 2* is probably a fairly hardcore fan anyway who already owns the movie. To be fair though, it's better than you might think. Not as bad as that Van Damme and Kylie live action travesty. Besides the film there's also a gallery of the introductory and end sequences from all five of the arcade titles, plus some music. Surely the boat could have been pushed out a little bit further for one of the most influential games of all time?

Your decision to splash out \$80 to revisit an ancient game will not only depend on a certain devotion to *Street Fighter*, but also your take on

the hoary 'graphics versus gameplay' debate. Frankly, no matter what the incarnation, *Street Fighter 2* isn't pretty. Maybe back when Van Damme actually carried films, but not now. For all *Hyper Street Fighter 2*'s nostalgic rekindling there are better beat 'em ups on PS2. Much better in the case of *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution*. If you're already a *Street Fighter* fan then this review will fall on deaf ears, while those who missed out on the series' heyday might wonder what all the fuss was about.

/ JONATHAN TODD

PSW VERDICT

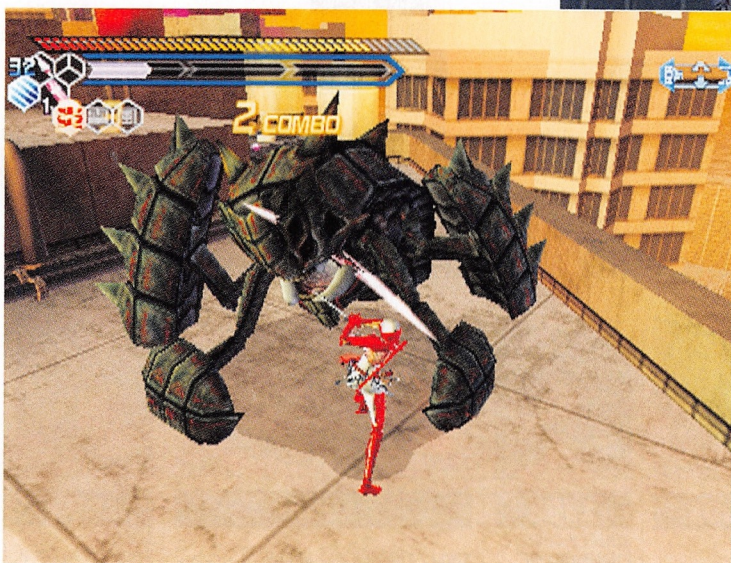
> UPPIERS	> DOWNERS
> Classic gameplay	> Early 1990's graphics
> Distinctive characters	> Uneven contests
> Human versus human	> Limited Versus mode
> Rewards skill	> Disappointing extras
GRAPHICS > As bad, or even worse, than you remember	4
SOUNDS > Faithful, but obviously poor quality	5
GAMEPLAY > The best 2D beat 'em up ever made	7
OVERALL SCORE A palatable slice of nostalgia. Not that we agree entirely with looking to the past, but if you're desperate to jog a gaming memory then you could do worse than pick <i>Street Fighter 2</i> .	6



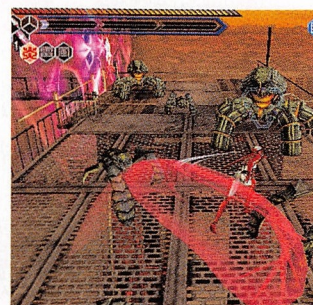
FIGHT ME Demons are no match for our ninja's mighty blades



BOSS! The boss fights provide some spectacle



FLYING Mid-air combos look flashy.



NIGHTSHADE

LADY NINJA WITH OWN SWORDS SEEKS HORDE OF DEMONS FOR FUN, VIOLENCE AND EXTRAVAGANT COMBOS. WILLING TO TRAVEL.



> TYPE	ACTION
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	MARCH
> PUBLISHER	SEGA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	OVERWORKS
> ONLINE	NO

BY ANY REGULAR STANDARD, NINJAS ARE

cool. If you happen to be that way inclined, you might even say the better kind of ninja was wicked. A particularly cool ninja – the kind of ninja the other ninjas bitch about when they're having a crafty cigarette out the back of the dojo because they're jealous of how goddamn cool he is and how he gets all the ninja chicks – might even be described as a Monumental Badass.

Now, if we take this Monumental Badass to represent the ultimate state of ultimate ninjedom then Hibana – the lady ninja star of *Nightshade* – would be a tiny weeping orphan child in a bin. Well, that's not entirely fair. Not weeping, more kind of sobbing.

Nightshade isn't a direct sequel to last year's *Shinobi* but rather a side story, albeit one involving the usual demons attacking the usual Tokyo, thanks to the usual evil machinations of the usual Nakatomi Corporation and its designs on the cursed blade Akujiki. Naturally, this means that you will be defending the usual Tokyo through the usual medium of kicking said demons squarely in the knees, stabbing them in

the armpit and then doing several types of special magic, right in their stupid, demon faces. Obviously, this is all fairly standard behaviour for ninjas, along with jumping very high into the air, throwing lethal shuriken stars with pinpoint accuracy, creeping through the shadows like the Invisible Man himself. Oh, and doing that really cool thing where they move so fast a little shadow of them is left hovering frozen in midair while they kick your ass. Hibana is more than capable of performing all these trademark ninja party tricks, despite having her own breasts. So why the "tiny sobbing orphan in a bin" thing then? Let's take her out and bounce her about shall we? Then you'll see. Oh yes.



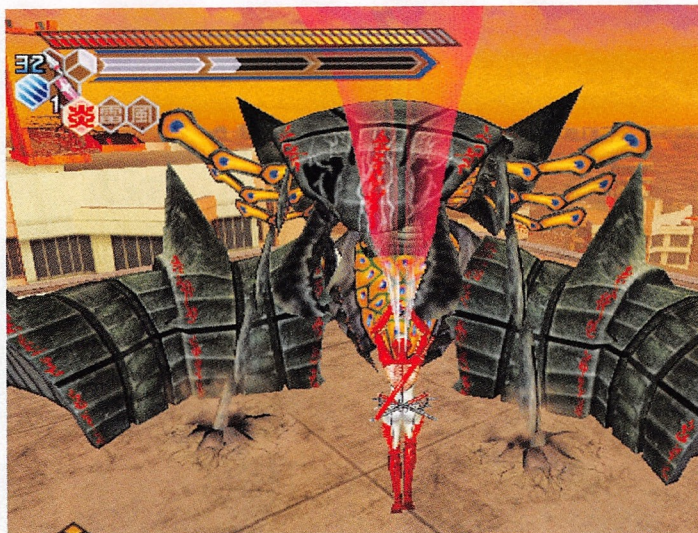
CRUNCHY Throughout the game, enemies are deeply, deeply strange.



MAGIC Your ninja is capable of some powerful magic attacks.



COMBO Press R1 then hammer X till they are all dead



LOCK ON Pressing the R1 button allows your ninja to lock on to enemies to maximise their ninja-ness.



SHINOBI DOES IT BETTER

PSW TAKES A LOOK BACK AT HOW THE SHINOBI SERIES HAS EVOLVED.



SHINOBI

The original, legendary arcade game, released in 1988 was a huge hit.



REVENGE OF SHINOBI

Released on the Megadrive, this game featured Batman. Oddly.



ALEX KIDD: SHINOBI WORLD

A spin-off title putting the Sega heroes into the same game.



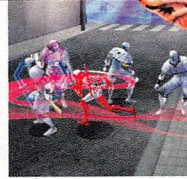
SHINOBI 3

This 1993 release was the last *Shinobi* game for a decade until...



SHINOBI

Shinobi finally makes the move to full 3D when it hit PS2 last year.



NIGHTSHADE

Brings the franchise up to date but is *Shinobi* in it at all? Maybe...



WANT TO FIGHT? FIGHT ME!

Nightshade isn't very pretty. Actually, it's very ugly. Rather like a blind man who insists on applying his own makeup with a power sander. In fact, it looks more like a budget PSone game, than something made especially for the PS2.

The game opens in the usual way, with your ninja chick standing atop a flying stealth bomber, fighting a selection of goons. Hold on, that's not entirely fair again. It's not actually a selection of goons, but the same goon over and over. And it's not fighting, it's mashing one, two or perhaps more of the buttons until they are all dead. Despite Hibana being capable of all manner of Monumental Badass manoeuvres, the controls are sufficiently vague and unpredictable to consign any initial hopes of Wicked Ninja Shit on Demand to the bin of shattered dreams. Okay, so she can jump, jump again, dash invisible and invincible through the air, kick, slash, throw shurikens and do magic. But once you take moving, camera control and lock-on into account you find yourself using a quite bewildering array

of buttons and sticks. Combine this with the spiteful camera and you soon feel like you've got the same level of control over your ninja as you might have were you trying to steer a B-52 bomber through the Grand Canyon by sending it letters once a week. Actually, that might just work if you had really neat handwriting...

WAA TAA!

The sequence of progression from the earlier game – destroy everything in one area to unblock your passage to the next and then eventually have a massive ruck with some kind of massive evil boss thing – remains intact. Gathering secret coins found hidden in boxes or behind suspicious looking walls results in your character unlocking the usual selection of fancy extras and pleasure-enhancing bonuses. These are designed to prolong the life of the game and encourage replay. And therein lies the real trouble at the heart of this game.

Despite the game being ugly, inelegant and repetitive, the basic idea of the Tate system [see Monumental Badass] to build up massive combos by killing endless bad things in linked flurries of slashing swords, spurting blood and stinking innards, could've added a real sense of panache to proceedings. Sadly, in order to pull off these extravagant moves, you need to kill every enemy in the room, even the tricky buggers loitering behind lonely columns or dangling from secluded corners of the ceiling. Thanks to the imprecise and unhelpful camera, this in turn means that you need to know where all the bad guys are before you start mashing them up.



SWISH The x button allows your ninja to fly for brief periods.

"NIGHTSHADE IS VERY UGLY. RATHER LIKE A BLIND MAN WHO INSISTS ON APPLYING HIS OWN MAKEUP WITH A POWER SANDER."

Designed to be played through several times before you get to the tasty marrow languishing behind its ineptly textured flesh, this is sadly far too dull, frustrating and archaic to truly warrant being played through even once.

So, it's like *Shinobi* then. Well, that's not entirely fair. Whereas *Shinobi* was a fresh new game *Nightshade* has had plenty of time to improve on the graphics, control, camera and structure of its predecessor. That doesn't seem to have happened. Without any *Shinobi* branding this will probably die alone and unloved. Much like the tiny weeping orphan child in a bin. Well, that's not entirely fair. Not weeping, sobbing.

/MARK SORRELL

PSW VERDICT

> UPBERS

- > Dramatic Tate cutscenes
- > Jumping really very high
- > Throwing shurikens
- > That fancy dash move

> DOWNERS

- > Looks like a chemical spill
- > Controls like a chemical spill
- > Plays like a chemical spill
- > Smells of piss

GRAPHICS > Looks like an accident in a paint factory

4

SOUNDS > Adequate. Peppared with cheesy dialogue

6

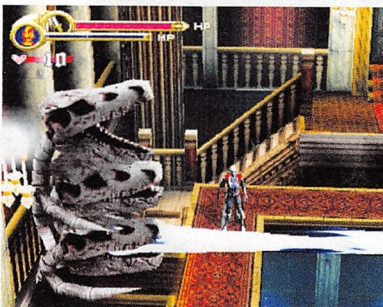
GAMEPLAY > Repetitive. Repetitive. Repetitive. Violence

5

OVERALL SCORE

A game from the past, reincarnated without the license that explained its existence. Avoid unless you love Ninjas. Or hunt down the developers and ninja them instead for this transgression.

5



CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE



ARE VAMPIRES REALLY ALL THAT BAD? IS THE BELMONT CLAN AS INBRED AS THEY SEEM? UNEARTH THE ANSWERS IN THIS 3D PREQUEL TO THE LEGENDARY 2D SERIES.

> TYPE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	KONAMI
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	KONAMI
> ONLINE	NO

SOME THINGS ARE BETTER LEFT IN THE PAST.

As we found out this month *Street Fighter* is one, and *Castlevania* appears to be another. A seminal platform adventure on consoles from, phew, nearly two decades ago, it's not surprising that it's taken more than a few bolts of energy to get it looking three dimensional and 21st century like. Out goes the incredibly dated and meticulous flat looking action. In come fully 3D rooms modelled in exquisite detail, enemies that finally do more than walk from side to side, and a castle so complex it makes the average termite nest look like a bedsit. Sure, the result is one of the most exquisitely made games you'll see this year, but something got left out on the way. Most of the fun, in fact. The frenetic platforming we used to love has been replaced with formulaic battles, some flashy but meaningless moments and a whole lot of trudging about.

Being a prequel the back-story is kept mercifully brief and so it's not long before your vampire hunter character, Leon Belmont, is entering the head bloodsucker's castle, whip in hand for a spot of kinky bondage with the undead. Five themed levels filled with hundreds

of rooms are there to explore before the final showdown in a sixth area. And just so you don't get too stuck the quintet can be explored in any order. Fortunately, Belmont is also equipped with a map — which you'll end up consulting every time you leave a room.

SPAWN OF THE DEAD

The first time you enter a room all the enemies within must be defeated before the exit points are unbarred. On your return you can just sprint

past the undead when they respawn, which is just as well since when you're not fighting to get out of a room you're backtracking through lots of previously visited areas. The medieval detailing within each level is superb, boasting some gorgeous architectural touches and lighting effects from stained glass windows, but the actual layout of the rooms is sterile. Every one is very big, very square, not very interactive and linked by repetitive-looking hallways that often don't contain any traps or enemies. Any sense of



DEAD AND BURIED Enemies respawn when you revisit a room.



HOLY SMOKE Use an orb with sub-weapons for an extra kick.

TOUCH MY BUM

THIS IS LIFE!

SEPARATED AT BIRTH

IF YOU THINK YOU'RE SEEING DOUBLE WHILE PLAYING *CASTLEVANIA*, THAT'S BECAUSE IT BEARS AN UNCANNY RESEMBLANCE TO *DEVIL MAY CRY 2*.

DEVIL MAY CRY 2



GAMEPLAY Third-person hacking and slashing of demons with some magic powers thrown in for the hell of it.



GRAPHICS Large environments include a foreboding Gotham City-style metropolis and a decrepit old European town.



COMBAT Stylish special moves and combos complement anti-demon firearms and throwing weapons such as blades.

CASTLEVANIA



GAMEPLAY Third-person hacking and slashing of the undead with some magic powers thrown in for the hell of it.



GRAPHICS A dauntingly huge medieval castle. That white-haired hero in a cloak certainly looks familiar too.



COMBAT Stylish special moves and combos complement anti-vamp sub-weapons like the Divine Cross.



structure or pacing is lost as you move from room after room of frenetic combat to vacant stretches of bummer all. Time-outs are fine as long as they're used appropriately.

Stripping the game almost bare of any traditional role-playing elements also goes down as a curious decision. Weapon upgrades and sub-weapons are your lot as far as developing your character goes, and even these don't come off as well as expected. The magic meter, for instance, drains far too quickly to make any worthwhile impact, and it's difficult getting close enough to enemies to throw short-range weapons such as holy water. When combined with orbs that you acquire after defeating boss characters these items do become more useful, but since you can only change your inventory in game time, and not while the game is paused, it can be a risky enough business just trying to drink a health potion during battle.

WHIP CRACK AWAY

Platform jumping only represents a minute part of the game now, though perhaps this is just as well. The camera is pretty reliable for the most

part, but every so often what should be a comfortable jump is turned into a leap of faith by it either not keeping up with Belmont or simply by the camera choosing an awkward viewpoint. Fortunately it doesn't happen often enough to spoil the game and you don't lose health by falling from a great height either.

Thanks to the wobbly camera enemies sometimes attack off-screen too, so it's a good job that the whip is such a sturdy weapon for cracking their hides with. Belmont has a standard attack and a stronger lash that leaves him more vulnerable to a counter-attack, but that's just for starters. He can also use his whip to haul himself onto high ledges or coolly swing from ledge to ledge Indiana Jones-style. For killing lots and lots of enemies you're rewarded with another 15 mainly whip-based skills for attacking, blocking and dodging. These skills become essential as you progress further.

And progress you will, probably finishing the game in around ten hours tops. Once you work out *Castlevania*'s system of hitting switches, dodging the undead and collecting hearts to power sub-weapons, the game doesn't seem so

big. A lack of save points and being forced to pass through the same rooms are pretty transparent ways of eking things out. If anything *Castlevania* seems like a tentative test version of something more ambitious that's been scaled down this time. It's as if Konami is gauging reaction to a 3D *Castlevania* game on PS2 before letting the series hit its stride in future sequels. Bring it on, we say. / JONATHAN TODD

PS2 VERDICT

> UPPERS		> DOWNERS
> Cool whip weapon		> Short and simple
> Helpful map		> Role-playing is A.W.O.L
> Atmospheric locations		> Repetitive rooms
> Stirring music		> Lots of switches
GRAPHICS > Go from detailed to sparse. Odd		7
SOUNDS > A memorable orchestral score		8
GAMEPLAY > Conventional but fun while it lasts		7
OVERALL SCORE		
Shorn of role-playing and platform-jumping bits <i>Castlevania</i> is just a standard third-person action game. It's better than most though and is good enough to warrant a second outing on PS2.		



SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON

HE'S THE COOLEST MODERN SUPERHERO AND A LEGEND AMONG COMIC BOOK FANS. BUT CAN SPAWN CUT IT ON PS2?

> TYPE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	MARCH
> PUBLISHER	EA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	POINT OF VIEW INC
> ONLINE	NO

IF YOU WANT MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD ACTION, look no further. Somewhere, probably in India because of the cheap labour, there's a factory making these games. The credits may well say it was created by an American team under the guidance of Japanese game legends Namco, but *Spawn* has production line, made-without-really-attempting-anything-new stamped all over it.

Spawn's got a few good ideas, but that's thanks to the great character design of the comic book's creators – the game itself is routine jump/attack

action right the way through. That said, we were initially very impressed by its dark and dirty atmosphere, which is in your face right from the start. There's not much in the way of story – often a small text intro to the level is all you get, or a short, ten-second spoken introduction if you're lucky. It's the quiet and brooding type. We like that.

WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP WHUP

In the background there's a constant throbbing, pulsating horror noise, which gives way to loud

metal whenever enemies appear. Which is great the first couple of times. Kill the enemies and you're back to the throb, then more enemies appear and the metal starts again. Soon you realise that's all that happens, and it gets a bit grating. It looks a bit better than it sounds, but not much.

The chains *Spawn* fires from his chest are a little weedy, while enemy mutant monster things are a mixed bag. That's the problem games always have when creating horned, spiky, winged things – they invariably end up looking spindly and weak. They do here, too. Exploding in a haze of blood is a good thing, but teleporting in new enemies in front of you all the time just reeks of a game sorely lacking in ideas.

Fighting them is a breeze, though – perhaps too much so. The Circle button is your axe, a pretty much unstoppable scythe that halts most enemies with a few swishes. Combos are performed by pressing Circle a few times in a row – this isn't complex stuff. The Square button shoots your default chains or *Spawn*'s chosen firing weapon, with pistols, shotguns and



GUTS GALORE The red stuff used to be a thing. Poor thing.



GO BERSERK These bad boys are chain-proof – axes needed.

HOW SUPER IS THIS SUPERHERO?

A STANDARD ACTION GAME, NOT REALLY BEFITTING SUCH A LEGENDARY SUPERHERO. HERE'S HOW IT GOES WRONG.



JUMPING CHALLENGES

If Spawn's so super, how come he can't jump from one platform to another easily? This is platform gaming at its most mundane.

HOW SUPERHERO IS THAT? Not super at all. It's un-super. Positively stupid. **1/10**



COLLECTING COMICS

To unlock images of the covers of *Spawn* comics, Spawn must collect comic icons. This is not how a superhero should spend his time.

HOW SUPERHERO IS THAT? About as superhero as standing up too quickly and feeling faint. **2/10**



ATTACKING FEET

What's with the feet attack? This is the video game equivalent of stamp collecting. It's not a viable superhero career path.

HOW SUPERHERO IS THAT? It's not super, it's not even fun. We feel ashamed. **2/10**



SHOOTING CHAINS

Pressing Square shoots chains out of his body which lock onto enemies and suck them to death. This is actually quite good.

HOW SUPERHERO IS THAT? Moderate. As super as a Kryptonite-weakened Superman. **6/10**

SUPERTOTAL:

11/40

An underwhelming and decidedly non-super showing from the so-called superhero, Spawn's transition to video game has left the man neutered, weak and sobbing. Must try harder.



NECRO-ENHANCER You gain strength from their death.



IN SIGHTS Pressing R1 locks on the guns for BIG DEATH.



"YOU'RE GIVEN INFINITE LIVES, RESTART POINTS GALORE, AND LITTLE IN THE WAY OF TROUBLING BOSSES."

machine guns locking onto targets with R1 and blasting them to their doom rather hastily.

In fact, when you're really in the mood for it, hacking your way through *Spawn* is fun – it's just way too easy. You're given infinite lives, there are restart points galore, and little in the way of troubling bosses to defeat. Decent gamers, especially fans of this sort of mindless-but-enjoyable smashing business, will manage to crack *Spawn* in a day.

GO BACK AND WALK

The only bits we had trouble with were some of the stupidly awkward jumping challenges. Level two – level two for God's sake – has a ridiculously hard jump/grapple challenge spread over three building tops. Miss the third jump (and you will, it's a bitch) and you're dumped back down at the start of the level. So off you go



again, climbing up, doing the first two, then messing up the last one and doing it all again. It's like they want you to get angry.

In the next level you're similarly stuck with jump/grapple moves that require you to double jump, glide, then fire your chains onto a target mid-leap – all on top of a building where you die if you fall off. Thanks game, thanks very much. Here those infinite lives come in handy – we wouldn't have got past this maddening level without them.

So after 20 attempts to get past that bit, our level ranking was, unsurprisingly, 'Inept'. Do we want to go back and get a better ranking? Not unless you're paying us to. Supposedly adding replay value is *Spawn*'s collecting angle, which has you rooting out comic book icons to see an image of the cover of the comic books. Which is kind of nice, but hardly thrilling stuff.

And that, as it happens, is pretty much our opinion of the game. You can enjoy its simple slashing charms, but there's just no spark of excitement here – sad for such a superb character as Mr. Spawn. We would give it an average six, but there are a lot of average sixes around right now. So have a disappointing and slightly lacking five, *Spawn*. We're making an example out of you.

/ GARY CUTLACK

PSW VERDICT

> UPBERS		> DOWNERS	
> Good recreation of Spawn		> Infuriating platform aspects	
> Cool hell power effects		> Routine slasher action	
> Brainless hacking		> Very simple puzzles	
> Terse intros		> Lacks superhero sparkle	
GRAPHICS > Spawn looks nice; enemies are a bit spindly			7
SOUNDS > Nice effects and OK-ish battle rock tunes			7
GAMEPLAY > Boredom soon sets in – don't expect a lot			6
OVERALL SCORE		It's OK, but is it <i>Spawn</i> ? The ultimate superhero in game form? Sadly not – it's too timid and derivative to thrill any but the biggest fans. And even they'll feel a little short-changed.	
		5	



FIELDING Manual fielding is very difficult to get the hang of.



INTERNATIONAL Traditional white for international matches.



BOWLING Pace and spin bowlers are available.



HOWZAT!? Smashing the stumps out of the ground.



UMPIRES Don't hold the player's jumpers.

CRICKET 2004

HOWZAT!? HOW IS WHAT? OH, THE GAME. RUBBISH, ACTUALLY.

> TYPE	SPORTS
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	EA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	HB STUDIOS
> ONLINE	NO

TRAIN JOURNEYS AREN'T VERY EXCITING.

Invariably you'll end up sitting in a chair that's slightly too small for a twelve-year-old girl, next to a man who sells coat hangers for a living, with only warm Lift and overpriced sandwiches to survive on. Your legs go to sleep, your arms go into a coma and within half an hour you've forgotten that there was ever anything but the train, nothing but the train, only the train...

Which brings us to cricket – the sporting equivalent of an unusually long and cramped train journey. Cricket falls several galaxies short of, say, making a milkshake when it comes to excitement. It also lacks the glamour, pace or sheer adrenal rush of even snooker, or darts. Therefore, any video game simulation of cricket

is going to have to be something very special indeed if it's to be anything other than incredibly boring. *Cricket 2004* is not very, very special at all. It isn't even special. Frankly, it's rubbish.

DOWN AND OUT

Cricket 2004 is ugly. You notice this as soon as your eyes happen across the screen and discover some spazzed-up, man-like figures flicking between animations on a big sheet of flat green. The crowd look more like cardboard than actual cardboard, and the stadiums appear to have been created by accident rather than design. Not what we expect from EA games...

How does it play? Really badly, that's how. Bowling seems remarkably random, and ball placement is difficult. In fact, the game observes surprisingly few of the concepts of real cricket. Playing the computer is a maddening affair – bowling hard at sweet spots will guarantee a wicket every time, but vast numbers of weaker tosses will be smashed for six over and over again. Batting fares no better with unresponsive and vague controls that seem specifically designed to thwart any attempt at mastering the timing of your shot for a huge mid-bat smash into the stands.

WICKET AND WILD

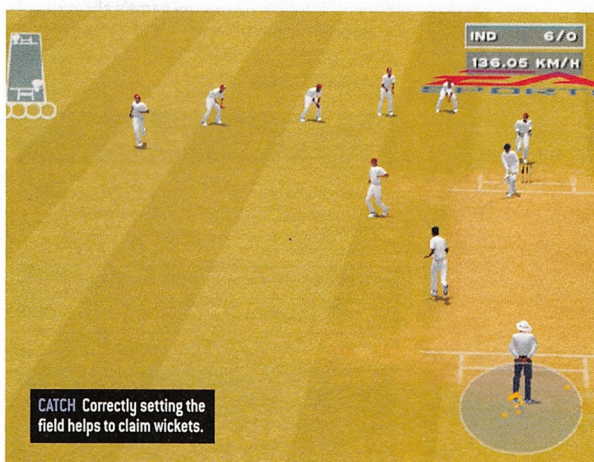
Obviously, with this being a sports game, proceedings come to a head in two-player mode because that's where the money is, eh? Well, no, because two-player mode doesn't offer any great improvements and absolutely no excitement whatsoever. The batting player can see exactly

what the bowler is doing and consequently pick his shot with impunity. After surprisingly little practice, the batsman has such an advantage it's just not funny.

The sound is perhaps the only saving grace and that's only because we find Richie Benaud's voice to be almost as relaxing as being touched in the bath. His commentary is nothing special but he has a nice, soothing voice. That's the best thing we can find to say about this game.

Frankly, unless you are a massive fan of cricket then there is no reason whatsoever for you to even think about buying *Cricket 2004*. If you're a massive fan of cricket then you're likely to take the game as a massive affront to you and your kind, go on some kind of crazed rampage and kill until you can kill no more. A truly appalling game. With *Rugby*, *Cricket* proves that EA's local forays should not be respected.

/ MARK SORRELL



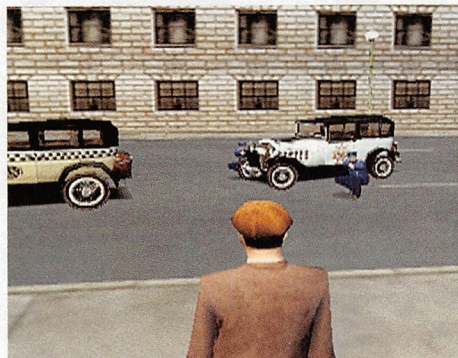
CATCH Correctly setting the field helps to claim wickets.

PSW VERDICT

> UPPERS		> DOWNERS	
> Bowling someone out		> Looks barely-finished	
> Richie Benaud's voice		> Plays frustratingly	
> You don't have to buy it		> Looks worse than we said	
> Or even look at the box		> It's cricket	
GRAPHICS	> Dire. The absolute bare minimum		2
SOUNDS	> Adequate. Richie Benaud's voice is nice		5
GAMEPLAY	> Bad. Well, it is cricket after all		3
OVERALL SCORE			
<i>Cricket 2004</i> didn't surprise us at all. Historically, Cricket games have never shone on consoles, but even by their low standards, this is poor. It looks rushed and unloved, but it's still likely to sell.			
			4

MINI REVIEWS

A QUICK ROUND-UP OF THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY. BUT MAINLY THE BAD. AND THE REALLY UGLY.



MAFIA

GAME FROM THE PAST LOOKS LIKE GAME FROM THE PAST.

> TYPE	ACTION ADVENTURE
> PLAYERS	1
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	TAKE 2
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	ILLUSION SOFTWARES
> ONLINE	NO

A REASONABLY BIG NOISE ON THE PC LAST YEAR, THIS is *Grand Theft Auto 3* for dapper gentlemen in menacing suits carrying very, very heavy violin cases. Set in 1930's depression era America in the fictional, yet familiar, city of Lost Heaven, you play the part of Tommy Angelo as he retells his time as a gangster on the make.

The first thing you'll notice is the authenticity of the graphics engine. Developed in the 1930's, the term "PSone graphics" has never seemed so apt. Textures seem to have been potato-printed on, and despite the scale of the city, there is no sense of wonder whatsoever. While the game itself is far from terrible, it does have little pure fun to offer. We can understand this kind of businesslike approach when the game makes itself easy to play, but this just isn't the case here. Multi-part missions without saves – where a single mistake means instant failure and yet more endless, pointless driving – suck all fun and happiness out of the game like some kind of special vampiric video game Scrooge.

Here at PSW, we spend up to 17 hours a day gangster trippin' and thuggin' out, but we much prefer taking the 'phat blunts and Roederer Cristal champagne' way than this lacklustre 'tommy gun and dames' path. When you're let down by technology and frustrating game design, you need a little personality to get you back in the game. While *Mafia* sets itself apart from almost everything else out there with its cinematic touch, it's neither charismatic enough or different enough to get the game back on the straight and narrow. A bad *Grand Theft Auto 3* clone set in 1930's America is still a bad *Grand Theft Auto 3* clone.

/ MARK SORRELL

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

A reasonable game let down by very, very bad technology. If you truly love the *GTA* experience then there is definitely fun to be had here. If you keep your eyes firmly closed.

6



PUYO POP FEVER

ANCIENT PUZZLE GAME GETS TOUTED AROUND THE MODERN AGE.

> TYPE	PUZZLE
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	SEGA
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	SEGA
> ONLINE	NO

CIVILISATION FIRST BEGAN IN MESOPOTAMIA, WHAT is now modern Iraq. Probably. We haven't actually bothered to check. What is more certain is that the ancient Mesopotamians spent quite some time playing *Puyo Pop*. What is even more certain still, is that they never quite fully understood what was happening.

This latest version of *Puyo Pop* is only one in a seemingly endless sequence of games stretching back to the beginning of time itself. *Puyo Pop* is very much like *Tetris* except with coloured blobs. Sets of coloured balls fall from the top of the screen, connecting four or more together results in them disappearing and points being added to the score. Clever players will be able to set up chain reactions as sets of colours disappear, scoring even more points. Two-player battles involve setting up these huge chains in order to dump vast numbers of translucent blobs onto your opponent's screen. Do it properly and you'll screw up their carefully laid plans, allowing you to pump the air with your fists of victory.

Unfortunately, the whole thing is let down by being really very hard and even more confusing. Much like trying to ride a unicycle, count a bag of live mice and play jazz trumpet all at once, *Puyo Pop* just asks a little too much of your head. Lacking the brutal yet elegant simplicity of *Tetris*, this is a little more complex than most tiny brainlets can manage. Being such a simple concept, this update represents little more than a fresh coat of paint and a few tweaks to the rule set, most so small that none but the most dedicated *Puyo Pop* ninja will even notice.

/ JONATHAN TODD

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

A simple yet sophisticated puzzle game that sits just the wrong side of accessibility. Satisfying when mastered but requires too much concentration to be truly great.

6



BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE II

ONLY BEARDED, POINTY HAT-WEARERS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO ENTER.

> TYPE	ROLE-PLAYING
> PLAYERS	1-2
> OUT	NOW
> PUBLISHER	ACCLAIM
> PRICE	\$99.95
> DEVELOPER	BLACK ISLE
> ONLINE	NO

IF YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED A ROLE-PLAYING GAME

before then tread very cautiously around the idea of losing your cherry to *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II*. This is an RPG in the most traditional sense possible with more magic, monsters and silly names than a dictionary dedicated to Tolkien.

If anything it might be too conventional. Those weaned on the spectacular *Final Fantasy* games will probably laugh at the rudimentary hacking and slashing that goes on here. Basically you wander through stereotypical fantasy locations (dungeons, strange forests and so on) repeatedly pressing R1 and X to block and strike respectively. Even the story is pretty forgettable, but we think it's got something to do with a Big Bad wanting to take a once peaceful land.

But taking the game at face value doesn't do justice to the meaty content. For starters, that lame story is actually a branching one, dependant on which quests you decide to embark on and which lines of dialogue you choose to spout. And then there's the game's sheer size. Over 80 levels are spread across four acts, so even if you refuse to wash, eat and sleep for three days you might have trouble getting through it all.

Character choices also affect the outcome. Whether you're a barbarian, monk, necromancer, rogue or cleric you then have further decisions to make in terms of allocating points to either spells or feats. Add to this the option to create your own items and it's easy to get sucked in despite your misgivings. Find someone else sporting a beard and you can bash monsters together.

/ JOFF BROWN

PSW VERDICT

OVERALL SCORE

It's rare to come across such a traditional, serious role-playing game on PS2 and even harder to find a great one. Best savour this while you can.

7



"I SUPPOSE I'VE DONE A FEW THINGS OVER THE YEARS. BUT ONE MUST, SOONER OR LATER, TRY TO GET CONTROL OF THOSE TYPES OF THINGS. AND I'M A FATHER NOW."

Talkback with **Michael Madsen**

The Reservoir Dogs psycho takes a detour from Hollywood, hell raising and Westerns to become the wheelman of Driv3r.

>> Hello mate. How is London? Are you there purely to record the Driv3r voice-over, or do you have some other business to attend to?

I was shooting a movie over here called *Red Light Runners* and I'm back in London to do some pre-production stuff, because we're going to start shooting again. I'm also over here to do a voice-over for *Driv3r*.

>> You have a reputation as a Hollywood hellraiser. Would you say that's fair?

I suppose I've done a few things over the years. But one must, sooner or later, try to get control of those types of things. And I'm a father now, I've got four sons so I need to make sure that I stick around to take care of them. So you kind of keep your priorities straight.

>> Tell us something we don't know about a famous Hollywood actor. Something that hasn't already been printed in the National Enquirer.

Man, I don't know. Well, I guess maybe Christopher Walken. I was at the Chateau Marmont hotel, where I lived for a period, and my sons were there with me. And I was throwing a spoon into the swimming pool, so my boys could dive down to the bottom and bring it back up. And Christopher Walken came walking up and noticed what I was doing, stopped at my table, picked up another utensil and tossed it in the pool. He looked at me and said: "Yeah, I have a brother and I know how this goes." I just thought it was a very charming introduction.

>> We hear you're a big fan of Westerns...
The last good Western I saw was *Unforgiven*, and before that was *The Wild Bunch*. Sam Peckinpah is dead and gone, God rest his soul. The Western thing is tricky, man. It really is difficult to do it without making it corny. I did *Wyatt Earp*, and may civilisation forgive me for doing that, because it was the most boring Western ever made.

>> You mentioned Wyatt Earp. It's because you were filming that movie that you couldn't play Vincent Vega in Pulp Fiction.

That's true. Larry Kasdan [director of *Wyatt Earp*] is a big fan of rehearsal, which I'm not a fan of and he had this whole rehearsal process that he wanted us to go through. If he had let me out of that, I would have been able to do *Pulp Fiction*. The funny thing is that, sometimes, things that seem to be negative turn out later to have something positive in them. If I had done *Pulp Fiction*, there would be no *Vega Brothers* [speculative film that Tarantino has denied he will make]. Sometimes down the line, things happen that you could never imagine.

>> Because Mr Pink was in fact Vic Vega.
Yes, I played Vic and John [Travolta] was Vincent, so if I'd done Vincent, I would've played my own brother. So now, at least, we can come back as brothers.

>> Travolta must be grateful because Pulp Fiction resurrected his career.
I do think that he definitely owes me a big favour. Maybe he'll let me use his jet...

>> You met some mafia guys prior to appearing in Donnie Brasco. Did you brick it?

I'm not a big tough guy, I'm just a person who is trying to get by. I felt that I had a responsibility to portray Sonny in the right way, so I felt it was good to meet with the guys in New York who were involved in that life. I spent a lot of time with them, and they were very gracious to me. They're a very interesting bunch of men. They have a code of ethics, which is something I understand very well. And I was hanging out with Joe Pistone all the time, you know. I got cassettes of the real conversations that were recorded by the FBI. They changed the screenplay, though, because Sonny was the one who brought Donnie into that group, not Lefty. They changed that in the screenplay

because Lefty was played by Al Pacino. In the end, Lefty died in prison from a heart-attack and Sonny was found dead in the Hudson river with his hands chopped off.

>> You were in Die Another Day. Are you going to appear in more Bond films?

Well, Lee Tamahori directed *Die Another Day*, and I had worked with Lee in *Mulholland Falls*, and Pierce Brosnan is a family friend because he lives down the block from me – our kids play together. When I found out that Lee was going to direct *Die Another Day*, I asked him if there was anything in there that I could do, because I wanted to go to London.

>> Do you ever have any Bond-style moments with Pierce in Malibu?

Well, I let Pierce borrow my '67 Pontiac GTO. I left my Goat GTO at his house one afternoon, and he asked me if he could take it for a spin, so I said, "Sure". Later, he called me and said, "Michael, I'm sorry about your car. I took it for a little ride." I've got these big tyres on the back of the GTO and the car has air shocks on it. Had he just taken it for a spin, as he said he was going to do, it would have been fine. But he apparently piled his whole family into the damn thing. There wasn't enough air in the shocks to support that many people, so the fender wells actually ground right off the front.

>> How was playing Tanner in Driv3r different from your normal roles?

I really enjoyed playing the heroic character for once. It was good for me, because I'm trying to get away from playing the hoodlums and bad guys. I like Tanner because, even though he's unconventional, he's trying to do the right thing for the right reason.

>> We see you as a possible Manhunt or Hitman fan. Do you play many games?
No, but my sons do. They're all game mad. They have every game you can imagine.

PROFILE

NAME

Michael Madsen

CREDITS

Quentin Tarantino's golden boy has starred in *Reservoir Dogs*, *Kill Bill*, *Die Another Day* and, er, *Free Willy*. As well as a film career, Madsen has also become a voiceover junkie, previously appearing in both *GTA3* and the recent *True Crime: Streets of LA*.

OTHER STUFF

Michael Madsen appears in the new movie *Blueberry*, out now.

WHAT'S ON YOUR

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COVER GAME



KILLZONE

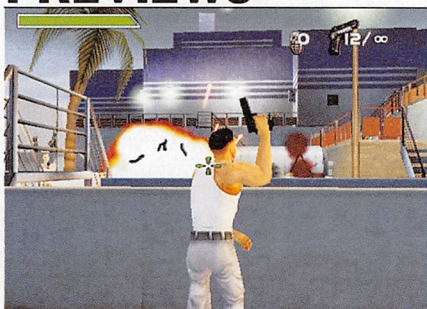
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We hope you're excited about *Killzone*. If you aren't excited about *Killzone*, you're probably dead, or at the very least, in a coma. Thankfully, help is at hand thanks to the majesty of this month's DVD, which features the hectic brilliance *Killzone* is preparing to bring to your life. Observe the level of detail and immersion and start the countdown to release.

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PREVIEWS



BAD BOYS II

Bad boys, bad boys, whatcha gonna do? Watch the DVD and see this new movie title in action? Can't say fairer than that. Fairer than that. Oh.

REVIEWS



R: RACING

The latest in the much-loved *Ridge Racer* series has screeched to a stop on our splendid DVD. Watch it quickly before it gets away! No, really.

NEWS



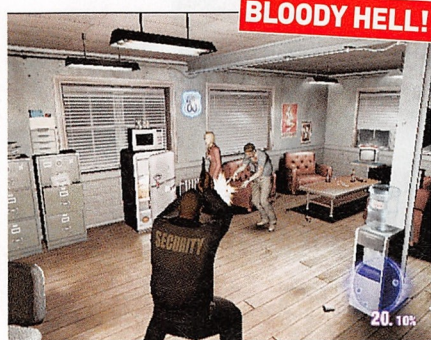
HITMAN: CONTRACTS

No, you're not saving the world here – you just kill people for money. See cunning ways of doing just that in this brand new video of the crime 'em up.

DISC IN FULL

>> **SPECIAL FEATURES** Killzone, Singstar >> **EXCLUSIVES** Resident Evil Outbreak, Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy >> **NEWS** Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow, Hitman: Contracts >> **PREVIEWS** Deadly Skies, Alias, Bad Boys II, World Championship Pool 2004, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles >> **REVIEWS** R: Racing, Final Fantasy X-2, Castlevania: Lament of Innocence, Nightshade, Spy Hunter 2, Hyper Street Fighter II, Puyo Pop, Urban Freestyle Soccer, Sonic Heroes, James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing >> **CHEATS** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King >> **EXTRAS** Rugby 2004 Trailer, Cricket 2004 trailer, Wrath Unleashed trailer, R-Type Final trailer, True Crime: Streets of L.A. movie.

EXCLUSIVES



RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

In-game footage of the latest zombie-flooded instalment of the *Resident Evil* series for you to peer at from behind the sofa. See fantastically created zombies shuffling around, some more zombies and, err, zombies. Also features a wonderful selection of the flashy puzzles and brain-stretching movie scenes to help you get in the Raccoon City mood. Pop the DVD in the drive and see the fear and loathing revealed before your own ever-so-special eyes.



PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

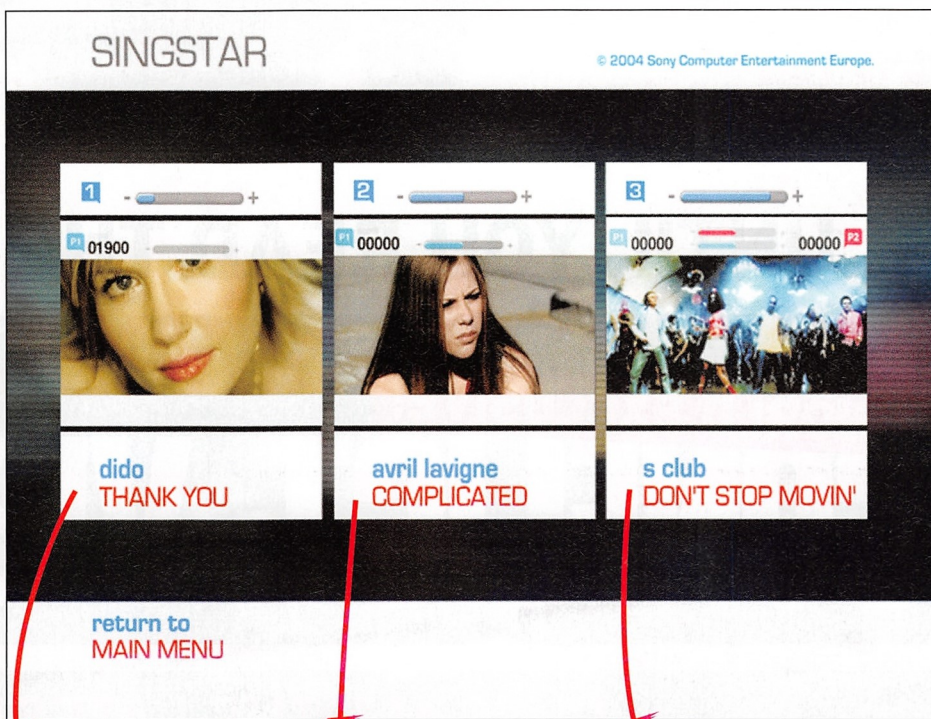
Here we present some lovely video footage of the rather wonderful *Psi-Ops* for your own personal viewing pleasure. We think this is going to be an interesting, non-linear take on action adventure and here's some footage to back that up. Observe the luxurious selection of terrifying mind powers and revel in the senseless and pointlessly cruel uses they can be put to. Look, listen and learn. If your brain explodes, that's not our fault.

SPECIAL FEATURES

SINGSTAR

THE GAME OF WAILING AND SCREAMING LOVINGLY PREPARED FOR YOUR PERSONAL EXCITEMENT.

Singing then. Not something that springs to mind when you think video games really, is it? Well we've been busy warbling our little hearts out and busting the sort of dance moves that would have even the mighty Justin Trousersnake licking our faces – all in the name of video games. Here we present a trio of delicately performed classics to help illustrate what you can expect from Sony's latest and possibly greatest party spectacular. Presuming that you are just as mind-numbingly untalented, footloose and fancy-free as our staff members are, we cordially invite you to slap the disc into your PS2 and see the future of music in the three following flavours:



DIDO – THANK YOU

Here we talk you through what's going on with all those strange squiggles on the screen while incumbent staff writer Mark makes you listen to him singing. Well, we say singing. There are definitely noises coming out of his mouth in semi-rhythmic fashion.

AVRIL LAVIGNE – COMPLICATED

A second solo effort, this time showcasing our ability to recreate the young Lavigne's carefully manufactured blend of pop-punk and teenage angst. Just like Avril, we look like mingers once our makeup is removed. A lengthy musical career surely awaits...

S CLUB – DON'T STOP MOVIN'

A duet, complete with dance moves that illustrates the sheer brilliance of including two microphones in the *SingStar* package. Also includes some truly great dancing that would put the real S Clubbers to shame. Well, at least the fat one who left before they officially split up.

GET IN!
ANOTHER PSW
NUMBER
ONE!

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ANYTHING ABOUT WAR...**



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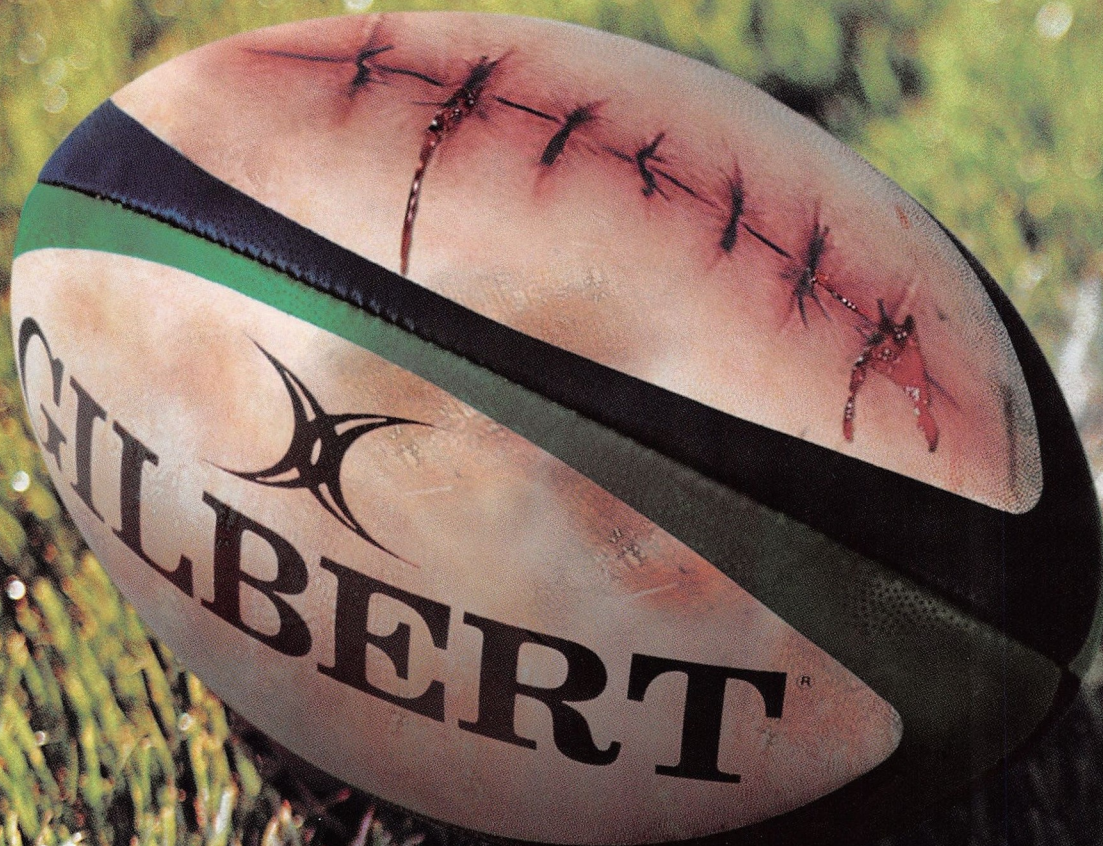
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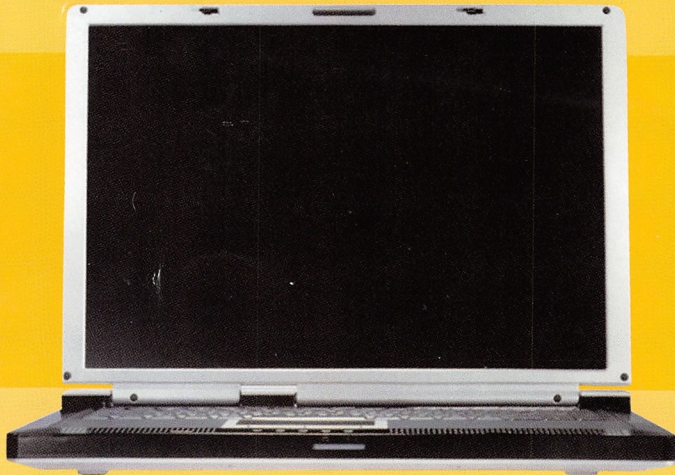


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